

# HOW TO **DISAPPEAR** IN AMERICA

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## Introduction

Nobody knows how many people “disappear” every year in the U.S., but it’s estimated to be in the *thousands*. Only a tiny number, however, actually end up dead or featured on *“America’s Most Wanted.”* The rest—by far—are more likely to say something like they’re “just going for a hamburger,” walk out the door, and simply never come back. We say they “disappear” because they choose to cut all ties with those they leave behind, and presumably start a new life somewhere else. Their reasons and reasoning we will discuss in a moment.

Who are these people? Why do they choose to leave? How do they succeed at staying gone? And if *you* wanted to disappear, how would you go about it? We will address these questions with practical answers in the chapters ahead.

At the outset, though, we want to note that this book has nothing to do with the tens of thousands of teenagers who are more properly termed “runaways.” Their solutions for teenage rebellion typically end as soon as their money runs out or they find no more sympathetic places or people from whom to mooch. Their “disappearance” usually ends with a collect call home for a pickup. The police write up these “missing” reports, of course, but unless there are signs of foul play they will simply “yeah-yeah” the parents and wait for the almost predictable outcome.

At the other “extreme” neither do we consider the thousands of fugitives in our midst to be the subjects of our book. These folks are definitely “missing,” but their motives are not those of the individuals we propose to help with this book. How they handle their “leaves of absence” may be helped by some of our suggestions, admittedly, but this is only an unavoidable aspect of our subject matter. (Sears hasn’t stopped selling guns yet, have they?) The police and other law enforcement agencies do take proper notice of fugitives by maintaining active files of these “wanted” individuals. In practical terms, however, the attitude of the police is one more of patience than persistence. They know from experience that fugitives, like most criminals, typically “bust themselves” in situations not related to their criminal activity. The cliché “bust,” by the way, is the fugitive who’s pulled over for a “broken tail light.” A few quick questions, and the guy’s on his way “down town for a warrant check, etc., etc., etc.” Dumb-de-dum-dum.

The people who can and *will* succeed at disappearing are quite different. We believe these individuals have reached some kind of unavoidable crisis, a time in their lives when they are telling themselves they “just can’t take it anymore.” We have seen this theme in

many recent movies such as "*Pushing Tin*," "*Office Space*," and "*American Beauty*." These people don't act stupidly by reaching for drugs or acting out other self-destructive behaviors, but rather they develop a plan, a very practical plan of action. They don't just walk out into the fog and hope to find a way. Instead, they know *exactly* what they're doing, and they stick with their plan. The kind of "disappearing" we want to talk about, then, is purposeful, planned, and ultimately successful. *How to Disappear in America* is meant to be a guide for anyone who truly wants to "start life over" under terms and conditions of their own choosing.

Over the past thirty years we have published many books on disappearing and starting life over, but the emphasis has always been on ways to change your identity, particularly your "official" identity with government-issued identity documents. People call this "taking the paper trip" after our unique books, *The Paper Trip I, II, and III*. We have received many testimonial letters over the years assuring us that our methods do in fact work quite well, and that readers of these books have indeed benefited from taking the paper trip.

The use of new identity *is* an important component in disappearing successfully, but there's actually a lot more involved than simply carrying around some new ID. To succeed with a new identity you must step into an entirely new life and lifestyle. The practical solutions for doing this, however, will not be found in some "newsy" magazine or newspaper article focusing on the dramatic side of someone's presumed disappearance. Neither will you find hints on the afternoon TV (trash)-talk shows that feature smarmy mush-heads trying to talk people out of their negative, loser behavior. Disappearing might be a good option for these characters, too, but unfortunately they're not smart enough to define and make the kinds of life-changes that would help them succeed.

Follow us, then, as we present the world of disappearing and how determined individuals can turn this action into one of creative rebirth with a safer, more rewarding life and lifestyle. Please read this book, however, as a collection of ideas relating to our theme, NOT as a step-by-step plan that anyone or everyone should follow. We're all individuals with unique needs and preferences, and no one book can provide a "one size fits all" plan for disappearing. Consider each chapter as more of a concept you might want to consider as part of your plan. You may find some chapters do not apply to you, but other chapters could well be exactly what you need for your disappearance. Read these with attention to detail, and we believe they will help you greatly.

- Barry Reid

## **Chapter 1**

### **It's NOT "Against the Law" to Disappear**

Unless you're on parole or under some other form of government supervision, and you're of legal age, you can hit the road and never come back any time you like. It's not against the law, either, if you don't turn and wave "good-bye." We've seen this uniquely American scene countless times in the movies, and we never fail to identify with the person taking off. In a real sense he is "disappearing" if he has no intention of coming back. Our assumption is that he has so little to gain by remaining where he is that uncertainty and the unknown are actually better options. And, of course, our American optimism assumes further that he will ultimately succeed and his future will be better! (Thank you, Hollywood.)

Yes, the movies are great, but how about the real world? If we identify with the character who shucks it all for a new chance at life, maybe it means that many of us experience the same kind of feelings and can imagine doing the same thing. The movie might act as the spark that ignites some people to action, but only if the underlying need for such action is already present. People who choose to disappear do have very good reasons, probably lots of them. The movie might make us think of disappearing, but it won't make us disappear unless we already have the desire and need to do so. At the very least, however, movies can provide the imagination and inspiration for taking better stock of our lives.

People who disappear are taking a fearful step into the unknown. But what they are disappearing from is even more fearful. The feeling of "not being able to take it anymore" can arise from a wide variety of situations. Typical might be:

- Unreasonable demands from parents or family members. Think of the "third generation" lawyer expected to become a judge. Maybe he just wants to play jazz piano in a nightclub.
- Unacceptable expectations from an employer. Consider the brilliant inventor who's required to become "management."
- Complete dissatisfaction in a chosen career or profession. How many accountants haven't wished to become rum-soaked beach bums?
- An increasingly hostile work environment. "Going postal" has real meaning these days...

- Unavoidable or unwanted sexual abuse. Watch any TV talk show or news magazine for a week and you won't be able to avoid the subject.
- Unending physical or mental abuse from a spouse or living partner. Why are there so many shelters these days for battered women?
- Even the deadening realization that a career or marriage is going nowhere. We've all heard of people just "walking away" from what seemed so good to others, but we will have to admit there really was a reason, no?

Sufferers in situations like these find themselves in genuine crises that must be resolved. The classic choice of "Fight or Flight" may ultimately present itself, and disappearing (Flight) could then seem a clear and reasonable option for survival.

But before you think we are trying to avoid some obvious issues here, the possible choices in these kinds of situations typically are neither pleasant nor productive. It doesn't take a degree in sociology to know how countless thousands regularly, and very unsuccessfully, deal with life. We can't go through a day without being reminded of any or all of these modern coping mechanisms—alcoholism, drug abuse, revenge, physical violence, "true believer" religion, "justice with a gun," terrorism(!), insanity, even suicide. But compared to these unfortunately common solutions for life's crises, disappearing would seem at least to be a hopeful option.

Before we leave this overview of the reasons for disappearing, however, we know that people who want to be helpful are always quick to suggest "therapy" for the sufferers. We do believe different types of therapy have benefited many people by helping them resolve all kinds of personal and social problems. We will not dispute this, and in fact hasten to agree that great good has come from a broadening awareness that therapy is a good option for many problems.

Our focus, however, is not on these "soft" solutions. If you want to pursue such possibilities we suggest you hasten to the pop-psych racks at Barnes & Noble, or set your TV/VCR for constant record/replay of Oprah, Rikki Lake, and other nauseating presentations of mush-head psychology. You will quickly become an expert on how to solve life's nastiest problems with just a little "confession and forgiveness." Truthfully, though, if you buy into this patter, and think people can and will "change" so easily, you haven't been on Planet Earth too long. We will leave the TV experts to provide viewers with what they want most—entertainment.

Our focus, instead, is on hard, practical solutions to very nasty problems. These kinds of solutions can bring real improvement simply because they work. The workplace bully, the wife-beater, and the all-controlling spouse aren't going to mend their ways just because a counselor tells them in modulated tones that they've been misunderstood all their lives, and need only to learn how to "be nice." Absolute baloney!

The reality of the real world, folks, is that there really are some really bad people out there who likely will never go to jail. Counseling and restraining orders mean nothing to them. They've been mean all their lives, don't care much for other people's feelings, and will live however they please. If you are unfortunate enough to have to be around an individual like this, you already know the price you are paying: hostility towards you and everything you represent, physical abuse and injury, subjection to psychological and emotional control, theft of your finances and property, loss of identity and self-esteem, harm to your health, and even an untimely end to your life.

Not a very pretty picture, but real nevertheless. Ask any of the thousands of battered women who every month seek shelter from assailant-husbands and partners. Ask the Joe Lunch Bucket who ends up shooting a number of co-workers. Catch the half-drunk attorney at the bar mumbling something about always wanting to be a pimp. Try and get the mother of three young girls to admit that their new stepfather is far more than “loving.”

Our point is simply that there can be times in life when leaving a situation—permanently—IS the best solution. The primary danger, of course, is that the situation may not end just because you walk out the door. It could well follow you down the street and into the next state or farther with spite, vengeance, and even greater danger. What then? The answer is to DISAPPEAR by removing yourself completely from the situation that threatens your very existence. The purpose of this book is to show how this can be done quickly, safely, and permanently. Our journey into the “unknown” will now begin.

## **Chapter 2**

### **You CAN Disappear—but Check the Roadmap First**

You've made up your mind "not to take it anymore." You've decided to leave it all behind and start life over somewhere else. You know you will be better off, and now you can't wait to get going. Inspired with new hope, you know you can do it, too. Well, good for you! We know you can do it, too!

But first we want you to be aware of some very helpful "travel tips" to point you in the right direction and keep you from losing your way. There's no sense starting out if you're not going to get where you want to go, right? So let's pull out the "maps" to see just what kind of trip you will be taking, how long it might take you, and what you can expect once you get to your chosen destination.

In this chapter we want to present a quick overview of options and considerations you need to think about first so you will know just what kind of trip to expect. We will be providing greater details, of course, on all these topics in the chapters that follow. Let's look at our handy "Disappearing" roadmap to see what kind of trip this might be. You will then know how to pack your bags correctly and choose the best routes for a safe arrival.

#### **Leaving—Now or Later?**

Is your situation so desperate that you need to leave with just the "shirt" on your back? Or, can you wait a few days to gather at least some minimal supplies and necessities before taking off? Better, can you take a few weeks, even months, and really plan your trip well?

Generally, the better the planning, the better your success. Time can be critical in these situations, we know, but you owe it to yourself to plan as much as possible so that when you do make your move you can travel quickly and avoid unnecessary delays and difficulties. You will see what we mean as we continue on...

#### **Taking off—What to Take**

Think of life's necessities—food, clothing, shelter, and MONEY. You will need these in one form or another immediately. You might also want some personal items, records, photos, etc. What if you are taking kids with you? Would another set of identification cards and documents be helpful? Would a cell phone be necessary and/or useful?

### **Staying Safe on the Road**

How will you travel—private vehicle or public? How can you cover your tracks? How can you get more money once you're on the road, and not settled into a job? What are the best (safest) places to stay short-term? How can you get temporary alternate identification? How can you establish a secure base for records and communications? How can you keep “moving” without actually traveling very far? What are the best methods for achieving a “low profile?” Will others really be trying to find you? What can you do if “they” do find you? How to tell if you're “worth” finding.

### **Short Term Parking**

Learn to live in a transitional, “temporary” mode while you plan your long-term life and lifestyle. Set up a communications base that you can continue to use safely into the future. Take advantage of your right to change your name (and your kids' names), as well as obtain a totally new Social Security Number. Begin regaining your old records in your new name(s)—safely and legally.

### **Transition to Long Term Parking**

Find a residence and area of the country to suit your long-term lifestyle. How to avoid having your “past” trip you up. Low-profile habits that will protect you. Build a completely new identity with no links to the past.

### **Putting Your Name on the Mailbox**

How to solidify your new identity and lifestyle—with no “ghosts” from the past. Solving the problems of new credit, employment, educational background, and leisure pursuits. Ways to make your new life “real.” Regaining assets from your prior life without giving away your new existence—privately, safely, and legally. Protecting your new assets from any claims from your past. How to enjoy being “reborn.”

We will now explore these topics essentially in the order you might need to use them for your disappearance. Obviously we can't anticipate everything that might be needed or encountered, but at a minimum we will cover the subjects you need to know about. Please read with an open and receptive mind. There may be items of no interest to you, but they will nevertheless give you insights into the challenges—and rewards—of starting a new life. This book is intended to be a “how-to” guide, and we sincerely hope it provides the inspiration as well as the practical advice you need to have a most successful disappearance.

PS: If you find items of interest you think we should include in future editions, please let us know. We will be glad to hear from you. Write to us at our address in this book, or send an email to: [EdenPressInc@hotmail.com](mailto:EdenPressInc@hotmail.com) .

## Chapter 3

### Taking Off

*“He who hesitates is lost.”* --Roman saying.

#### Leaving in a Hurry

You’ve decided to disappear and start a new life, but you still have one more decision to make. WHEN should you go? The answer depends mostly on your present situation.

If you are presently in great danger, facing threats of violence or actual violence, your decision is pretty much made for you. LEAVE NOW! You must remove yourself and seek aid from the police, who in turn will assist you with finding appropriate shelter or other alternatives. They see this all the time, and can make referrals or put you in contact with agencies and services that can provide immediate help. The only thing of importance in situations of physical abuse, battering, and violence is getting away.

The shelters for battered women provide exactly the help and environment these victims need to protect themselves from their persecutors. These aren’t just “any port in a storm,” but rather very dedicated agencies anxious to protect their “clients” from further injury. Most also offer a wide variety of programs to help women find better alternatives than returning to their previous situation. The important point, though, is that these shelters are these safe havens for victims of spousal abuse and violence, and they can indeed serve as a perfect starting point for a new life.

We would point out that most shelters have their own “agendas” for the kind of help they offer, but that is beyond the scope of this book. Just be aware that after the first couple days of “recovery” a guest may find herself listening to suggestions for change based on that particular shelter’s view of what a woman’s life should be. She will hear views coming from a variety of sources—social theory, legal, psychological, and worst, religious. Persuasive arguments notwithstanding, unless the woman makes up her mind to really change her life, none of this talk will help. The same rotten animal will be waiting for her if she goes back. (Do you think he is going to change?)

For women who need to disappear FAST, the shelters are great resources. They can definitely provide immediate necessities as well as good information and advice. They serve also as safe havens for gaining a better perspective on the choices that lie ahead. What the

shelters cannot do, however, is provide any kind of long-term solution. At some point the woman is going to have to leave and make it on her own. If she can plan for this during her stay, the better and safer it will be for her. What she should accomplish during this time is what others usually arrange in advance of their disappearance. That is to say, if you don't have to leave in a hurry, take the time to PLAN your trip! Consider this a basic rule of disappearing:

***The more you can plan ahead, the more successful will be your disappearance.***

Even though you might be in a hurry to get going, your enthusiasm will turn quickly to despair if you find too many obstacles you "hadn't thought about."

You know you will need to provide for all your necessities, and it will be a lot easier if you have more of life's conveniences waiting for you. We will show you how this can be done. The important point here is that you take the time to plan your disappearance and how you will carry it out.

We should point out something of a paradox here. Even though the conditions that convinced you to disappear are unacceptably negative and have probably made you miserable for years, just the decision to disappear can improve your outlook immensely. You've suddenly found the answer to your problems, making them no longer of consequence. People around you might find you mysteriously happier (try not to smile all the time), and come to believe that you've finally "seen the light," or found some acceptable way of selling your soul. Once you leave, however, they will be baffled by your actions, shocked to think you did such a thing just when you "seemed to be getting it together." But this thing is for you, not them...

## **Taking Your Time to Leave**

*"The longest journey begins with a single step."*

If you take sufficient time to plan your exodus from current torment, you will enter the promised land a much safer and happier person. You will not only have "things" waiting for you, but also prearranged solutions to problems that could otherwise present you with delays, even danger. Instead of simply storming out the door with nothing more than a few possessions, no destination in mind, credit cards and a car still in your name, and unknown prospects for new employment, you should use your time to plan for a safe and secure escape.

Before we consider your preflight plan, however, we need to bring two important points to your attention. First, your planning will have to be based on one overriding concern: How hard will others try to find you, if at all? Are you actually "worth" trying to find? If no one will be looking for you, your plans are considerably simpler. But if you know that a vicious spouse, private detectives, bonding agents, insurance investigators, or some "brotherhood" types are quite likely to be on your trail, your planning will have to be done very well. We can't guarantee you will be able to elude these hound dogs, but we will present as many possibilities for successful escape as we know of.

The second important point: Assuming you do have a successful disappearance—despite any "missing" reports—it's always possible that a policeman or detective might someday "find" you. What then? If you are of legal age, and are not a fugitive wanted on

some warrant, NOTHING will happen. You can tell them both to butt out and not bother you anymore, and that you have no intention of returning to whomever or wherever you came from. They cannot compel you to return to your former life, and in fact will relay your message back to those who sent them. The one quality most detectives and police officers do have is discretion. They are skilled at understanding people and situations, and will not give you away if you tell them not to. (The detective may not tell you this, but there could be legal issues relating to “invasion of privacy” that he would not want to confront.)

One more item for you should know about concerns the Social Security Administration. This agency offers a free service for people trying to find long-lost friends or family members who are believed to be receiving retirement benefits. They will accept a letter directed to the retiree and send it along with his monthly check. The SSA will not give out the address, of course, but if the recipient chooses to respond, he’s been “found!”

In the weeks or even months before you make your disappearance you should decide as much as possible how you will provide for your needs. You can actually begin making arrangements so that the things and services you want will be “waiting for you” when you arrive. Let’s look at some of the basics.

## **Money**

Cash speaks all languages and it doesn’t have your name on it. The more available money you have, the more your options. In your present case, it will definitely buy you some happiness. Quietly collect as much cash as you can. You might leave minimum amounts in any bank or other deposit accounts rather than close them, since closing often invites unwanted questions. If you need to raise more cash, consider having a garage sale or two, and finding private buyers for some of your more valuable items. Unless you plan to move around with a U-haul, you will be better off getting rid of as much stuff as you can and pocketing the cash. You will need to keep your cash safe, so consider a money-belt of some kind. If the sheer amount of cash is too great, buy U.S. Postal Money Orders in various amounts. Don’t sign them or enter any other names until you are ready to use them. Keep them secure of course, since anyone else could use them if they found them. The reason for the money orders is that they are virtually as anonymous as cash, and if you don’t want to, you don’t have to put your name on them either. If you do use them for payments later on, simply get written receipts and keep them with the (blank, unsigned) money order receipts. These will be more than adequate proof of payment.

One final note on carrying cash: Even though you use a money belt, it’s still a good idea to split up your cash into various stash places. Secret pockets, inside coat linings, underwear, and shoes are still good places to put some extra bills. There are also ways of placing cash inside bottles, cans and boxes so that it won’t be noticed easily. Of course have some in your wallet “just in case” someone thinks they need the cash more than you do....

Finally, in case you’re thinking of using Western Union or one of the other money-sending companies, forget it. You’re creating a record along with a destination, and you’ll have to identify yourself at the receiving end to an individual who may remember you. Sometimes, too, the agent may not have enough cash on hand to pay you, and will ask you to take a check. NEVER take a check from Western Union—they have been known to renege (stop payment)!!

## **Credit Cards**

If you are presently using credit cards, you cannot use these same accounts in your next life for an obvious reason: you won't be disappearing at all! The records of your new name, address, telephone number, place of employment, etc., will just get added into the same system, there for any and all to see. Credit records are the first places investigators and skip tracers check for leads to people who had the nerve to move without providing a forwarding address.

You will definitely be leaving behind all your credit accounts, with no forwarding address. Honest accountholders may be inclined to pay off these cards first, and that's fine, but it may jeopardize your cash position. If you do pay off your accounts, it might be best to leave them open, rather than close them. Down the road, investigators might draw negative conclusions from a credit report with no entries except "closed." If the accounts show "open, paid in full" most investigators would assume you're still around somewhere...

It will take at least 90 days for the credit companies to get cranky with their "demand" notices, by which time you should be long gone. If the balance of any account is under \$15,000, the creditor will ultimately write it off within a year by sending it to a collection agency. They in turn will try to collect, but your disappearance will leave them with nothing more than unanswered phone calls ("disconnected," most likely) and letters marked "Return to Sender, Addressee Unknown." They, too, will ultimately give up and write you off.

If this seems unethical, perhaps it is. But then the existence you are leaving behind might not have been totally ethical in your opinion, either. If not paying your bills continues to bother you, however, you can always settle later through an attorney who will be able to negotiate a much smaller amount owed while protecting your new name, situation, etc.

If the amount of your account is over \$15,000 the creditor will likely make serious efforts to collect by getting a judgment for the amount plus accrued interest, costs, and then try to collect by attaching any property you might own. This could include investments, bank accounts, personal property and real estate.

We are including these details on credit, not to be a complete description of the situation, but to give you a clearer picture of what you will be "leaving behind." Which leads us to our next topic:

## **Leaving Without Losing**

If you do have property and investments that you can't easily liquidate before leaving, you should consult an attorney who can advise you on such topics as asset protection, "judgment-proofing," and various kinds of trusts. You could make him (or her!) your legal representative through a "power of attorney" agreement, enabling him to dispose of your property according to your wishes, or transfer it so you could have access to it in your new existence. We can't list all the possibilities here, but your attorney can. He can arrange your affairs so that you become his "anonymous" client, if you wish to establish such a relationship. It could amount to the same as your still being there to direct matters yourself.

It may not be a good idea to use your present attorney, but if you feel he would definitely look out for your best interests, by all means let him work for you. You should have a detailed meeting with him well in advance of your disappearing to spell out exactly what you have in mind and what you want him to do for you. If he seems reluctant to work with you, however, drop the subject and find a more "helpful" attorney. Attorneys specializing in trusts, estates, and other privacy concerns are your best bet.

Perhaps the best reason for setting up a relationship with an attorney is that he can provide a very solid, reliable, and useful “interface” for anything that requires privacy or protection either in your new life or from your past. He could receive mail for you and redirect it however you wish. He could open accounts for you, make investments, sell property, even sue on your behalf! You never have to show up, and he will never divulge that “you” don’t really exist anymore. Once you establish a working relationship with your attorney, he will do as you wish. Wealthy families have used attorneys in this manner for hundreds of years. You can do the same. This role was portrayed to the fullest in Charles Dickens’ wonderful novel, *Great Expectations*.

### **Getting Out of Dodge City**

How do you plan to leave? What mode of transportation would be best? How much “stuff” do you plan to take along? Will anyone be on your trail? Do you have a definite destination in mind?

Your answers will suggest the best way(s) to get out of town. Assuming you’ve done some planning, you might also have the luxury of taking your time leaving. Perhaps you’ve packed several bags of personal items, still have a car to use and enough cash to pay for some public transportation. A good plan might be to drive to the largest airport in your area, park in a public lot, and take a taxi to the local Greyhound bus terminal. If you’ve done your planning, you already know what bus you will be taking (you might have purchased the ticket in advance, too), and can avoid waiting around too long in the terminal. The bus will be able to accommodate your baggage and you will be traveling about as anonymously as you can.

Meanwhile, it will be at least several days, even weeks, before the airport parking authority takes any interest in your “over-parked” car. Ultimately it will be removed to an impound lot unless someone else can claim it. A person trying to find out where you went would most logically assume you had taken a flight, but to where? Unless some form of law enforcement is involved, they will have little luck getting the airlines to search their passenger lists for your name, which of course won’t be there anyway. Anyone on your trail will find no tracks. You’re gone and quickly disappearing.

There are other ways to leave you might want to consider, too. Since your car (or cars) can definitely create a clear trail thanks to “Vehicle ID Numbers” (VIN), and annual registration, your best option is to dump the ones you own. There are numerous firms that “buy only” cars for cash on the spot. You may not get top dollar, but you can avoid the hassle of trying to sell it yourself as well as the extra attention you will get from the neighbors and others who know you. The quick cash will come in handy, and can buy a lot of miles on public transportation. If anyone asks why your car isn’t around, just say “it’s in the shop.”

If the car is no longer worth much, you might drive it to a disreputable part of town, leave it unlocked with the keys in the ignition, and call a taxi for a pickup. This is a great way to get the bloodhounds onto a very misleading trail. The car will most likely be used by some local hoods for who-knows-what purposes, putting your disappearance into an even murkier light.

One final pointer: If you do know where you want to go, it may be a good idea not to go directly there. Split up the trip into two or three “dog leg” stretches, with maybe a day or two layover between each trip.

Low-profile traveling tip: You will be around other travelers whose conversations and questions will focus on the purpose of your trip. Be prepared with a totally bland story about deciding to “see a bit of the country” on your way to visit a dying relative. You might as well start practicing your “background” story, too, since it will be useful once you start your new life in a new place. Cook up anything you feel comfortable with, but doesn’t give away your actual past. It should be believable, but uninteresting. If you feel you can’t get away with a tale or two, reverse the conversation and ask the questioner about his background, and keep on asking questions. He will leave you thinking you’re the most marvelous conversationalist he’s ever met. People always like to talk about themselves, so let them.

### **Travel Light**

On the road you should take only the items you can carry in two hands. A person with two bags is not unusual, but someone struggling with five or six will be noticed and likely remembered. Think in terms of having to walk a mile or two with your bags, and you will quickly understand what’s reasonable. We have no particular suggestions for the items you might want to pack. You can decide this better for yourself during your “planning” time. We would recommend, however, that you use the larger-sized sports bags simply because they are more informal and don’t create the image of “traveler.” (But don’t use bags with some pro team’s name and logo splashed all over—much too easy to notice and remember.) To make these suggestions even more convincing, how many times have you waited longer at an airport luggage carousel to claim your bags than it took to get there? Speed may be important in your disappearance, so don’t slow yourself down.

### **What to Wear**

On the road you will want to be comfortable, not concerned about getting a little wrinkled and dirty. Think “doing nothing but laying around on Saturday” type of clothes—jeans, casual shirt, walking-around shoes, over-shirt and coat, if necessary. Not too sloppy, but not too snappy, either. The main concern is that you not appear unusual or obviously not the kind of person who travels the back roads. Be prepared for the weather, of course. Final note: avoid any clothing items that have printed messages, logos, or other memorable features. You want to appear absolutely ordinary, bland, and “average.” Shop at Sears.

### **A Good Night’s Rest**

Once you’re on the road you will need to get sufficient rest to maintain your alertness and health. Plan to stay at safe but modest lodging. Hit the shower and get a good night’s sleep. Pay your bill in cash. Small hotel/motel keepers love getting cash and will not ask many questions. Again, be prepared with your bland reasons for being where you are and where you’re going, etc.

If you’re staying overnight in a very small town, it might be best to avoid the local bar/café for dinner. You will be surrounded by inbred, nosey types who never miss a chance to give a stranger a thorough going over. Try to “land” in a place with fast-food places whose help could care less who comes to the counter. Of course you could always pack in your rations for a few days’ travel, but that’s your choice. The important point is not to put yourself in situations where the locals might find you worthy of more than passing interest. If pressed,

just say you wish you could stay longer, but you've got a "check-in phone call" to make to the wife and kids in exactly ten minutes. See ya.

### **So Where Ya Headed?**

The correct response to anyone who asks this question is any large town at least 500 miles from where you do intend to go. You have relatives there, and will be staying with them while you look for a new job. Evoke sympathy with your story of having been a field representative for Enron, and losing all your retirement funds. Where you are really going you will not tell anyone during your trip. You will not be seeing them again and they do not need to know.

OK, so where are you going? This will have to be your own decision, of course, but we want to make sure you consider some factors that might be of real help to you. Ideally you will want to go to a town large enough that you won't automatically be known as a stranger. You will also want a town that has easily rented living units, preferably with high turnover. It would be helpful, too, if the prevailing social attitude is noticeably better than provincial. Better still if there is generally good demand for part-time work, and employers don't bend over backwards to "investigate" new hires. Finally, the notion of transience or non-permanent residence status should be widely understood and accepted. Where can these conditions generally be met?

You have two basic choices: 1) the very large cities like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Miami, St. Louis, etc., or, 2) large university towns like Berkeley/Oakland, Austin, San Diego, Eugene, Tucson, Las Cruces, Boston/Cambridge, and other cities where the university population is at least 20,000 and the surrounding area supports more than just the university. You will find these towns provide the conditions listed above, and even more that will benefit you. You can allude to just about any kind of background and/or plans for the future, and people will believe you. Many people in these towns are themselves "in transition", with no plans to become part of the local establishment. It will be easy to rent simply a room in someone's home or share an apartment in neighborhoods that see thousands of students "come and go" every semester. You will benefit from the general anonymity of everyone who lives in these towns.

There are other advantages, too. You won't be bored. Entertainment of all kinds is every night of the week, and varied. Universities attract all manner of cultural events, many of which are absolutely free. The general level of IQ is higher because the hicks and rubes don't live here. If you are looking for a new direction in life, the university ambience offers nothing but. You will meet people with energy and ambition who relish the chance to start new ventures and need people to grow with them. These optimistic types don't focus on "background checks" either. They're looking for ability and attitude. The local community typically shares the more liberal university outlook with many start-up businesses. (Example: Dell Computers was started by Michael Dell in his garage, custom-making computers for his college friends. He soon dropped his University of Texas (Austin) classes to become a local tycoon. The rubes and hicks he has assembling his units now drive new pickups, too...)

It shouldn't be too hard to create a reason for moving to a university town. Perhaps you want to resume your work for a degree "next semester." Maybe you're taking a year off thanks to the grant you received for advanced tornado studies (which will keep you going here and there.) Pick up the local newspaper and you'll get inspiration from the great variety of

activities and business pursuits you'll read about. While you're at it, pick up the daily campus newspaper for insights into local interests as well. It shouldn't take long to see how you can "fit in."

Here's an example: The city of Austin, Texas, is home to the University of Texas as well as probably the most vibrant enclave of musicians in the U.S. Just six short blocks down from the state capitol is "Sixth Street," known locally as "The Live Music Capitol of the World." On a five- or six-block stretch of Sixth Street, on each side of the street, is bar after bar each with live music being performed every night of the week, all year long. The college crowd is obvious, but visitors from everywhere mill along Sixth Street, popping into whatever bar seems to be having the kind of music they like. If you're a musician, you're in heaven. If you're looking for work in one of the bars, the turnover is constant. The point is that here is an ever-changing milieu offering opportunities for new connections, short-term employment, and who-knows-what-else. Other university towns will have similar possibilities for quick assimilation, no questions asked. All you have to do is be ready to accept some changes—the doors will open.

Here's one final observation about university towns. Enroll at one of the "community" colleges in the area for the purpose of getting a student ID as well as access to any free or low-cost medical/dental care at the campus clinic. Don't worry about not qualifying as a "resident;" just fill out the application as if you've been in the area all your life. They never check these things. (You can fill in an appropriate driver's license number and SSN, and they won't check these things, either.) Go ahead and sign up for some classes that interest you—you're now a member of the community.... We will have a lot more to say about ID in Chapter 7.

## **Chapter 4**

### **All About Mail Drops—And Why You Want One**

Unless you have already read some of our “Paper Trip” books, you may not be familiar with what we call “mail drops.” The U.S. Postal Service designates these independent businesses “Mail Receiving Agencies,” but we prefer to call them “Mail Forwarding Services” (MFS). All these terms apply to the same basic service, namely, a private, usually small business that you authorize to receive your mail at its address. They will hold your mail at their location for your pickup, or provide any number of other services for handling your mail per your instructions.

For example, they can pack up your weekly mail and send it in a single envelope to any name or address you provide so long as you provide the fees for postage. They can also receive mail under any name(s) you list on your application, even “code” names. You can typically call them to see if you have any mail, too. They are also able to receive packages for you from outside shippers like UPS, FedEx, Airborne, DHL, etc., and in turn can hold or forward these per your instructions. Many of these services also offer 24-hour availability to your box.

So why would you need an MFS if all you want is mail delivered to your door or any other services already provided by the Post Office? An honest, albeit innocent, question, but our honest answer will convince you otherwise. To explain, however, we need to digress a moment.

Back in the late Sixties, when the world was quite different, the Baby Boom people were beginning to leave home in great numbers, starting new families in cities and suburbs, but also hitting the road in their VW vans with no fixed address or destination in mind. The fossilized Postal Service of the day took no notice of this trend and refused to make more postal “boxes” available to the demanding public. The result was waiting lists in some areas many months long, creating an intolerable situation.

American ingenuity to the rescue, though, as many small entrepreneurs soon began cobbling together groups of “boxes” in store fronts and other handy locations, offering “private” mail services to all comers. These private business people listened to their customers and began making money by providing the very services the Post Office would not. You could say the Postal Service shot itself in the foot over this development, but it would be more accurate to say they didn’t even know how to load their gun... To this day the Postal Service does not oblige the postage-paying public by offering the services private “mail drops” are

happy to provide and prosper from. About the most you can say they have done is to legitimize the status of mail drops by allowing them to register with the Postal Service as “Authorized Mail Receiving Agencies.”

We will not bog you down with all the bureaucratic details of how the Postal Service deals with the thousands of mail drops located throughout the U.S., but we will tell you that you can deal initially and directly with the MFS of your choice without ever setting foot in a post office. You will never need the “permission” of the Postal Service to use an MFS. The independent operator of the MFS will present the simple paperwork, collect your fees, and provide all the services he is prepared to offer any of his customers. Let’s look now at how these amazing businesses can serve you during your disappearance and as you move into a new life.

## **Everything You Need to Know about Mail Drops**

Mail drops are also known by other names, such as Mail Forwarding Service (MFS), Remail Service, Mail Receiving Service, and overseas, Accommodation Service. Their primary function is receiving your mail from the post office and making it available to you as you require. The official attitude of the Postal Service is at least ambivalent, as we noted above, since these businesses gladly handle mail which would otherwise present “problems” for postal employees. Today there are at least 5000 mail drops in the U.S. alone, most offering a wide selection of services for which their customers are more than willing to pay.

### **Why Use A Mail Drop?**

Read the following story:

“My name is Bruce B. and I want to tell you a true story that could save your life as well as your loved ones. Last New Year’s Eve my girlfriend and I were on our way to dinner when we were followed by a thug in an old car who thought I had cut him off. He followed us to the restaurant and pulled into the parking lot behind us. Frankly I was a little scared. There are lots of nuts around these days. I saw him write down my license plate number and as he sped off he shouted, ‘You’ll hear from me real soon!’ Unfortunately it is too easy for a street scum like this to obtain my address. But little did he know I receive my mail at the Hollywood Mail & Message Service.

“Having your home address on your driver’s license or vehicle registration, not to mention your checkbook can be dangerous. Protect yourself. Don’t become a victim! Women are especially vulnerable, protect yourself from potential stalkers. But everyone should protect his or her privacy for safety. Believe me I know all about privacy and protection... I’m a private investigator.”

*--Bruce B., Private Investigator, Los Angeles*

The above story illustrates a primary reason for using a mail drop, namely PRIVACY. Personal privacy affords protection from others who may seek to take advantage of you, threaten you in some undesirable manner, or try to “find” you when you want to remain hidden. Other people do not have to know all about your life and affairs (despite the banal idiocy

practiced on “Trash TV”) and you can do much to protect yourself from snoops and criminals. Consider the following ways a mail drop can serve you, as well as offer benefits you might not otherwise have thought possible.

### **Convenience**

At most mail drops you can call in to see if you have received mail for the day. You can buy stamps, ship parcels via UPS (and other carriers), receive parcels from just about any carrier, and likely never have to stand in a line. If you travel often or are gone for periods of time, the mail drop will hold your mail, or remail it to you at addresses you designate, whenever you choose. Many retirees actually travel continuously, as do some salesmen, and they use mail drops as their “permanent address.” Many mail drops also offer 24-hour access to boxes, and operate public fax service as well. They typically have copy machines, and can assist with packaging for shipping via UPS and other carriers.

### **Security**

Mail drop customers can avoid theft and tampering with their mail, which happens unfortunately all too often in the “public” mailboxes at apartment complexes, and even in quiet suburbs. Thieves seem to know just when important checks, banking data, and credit card mailings are due to arrive in the mail, and help themselves to it. Until recently the Postal Service blithely accepted “Change of Address” forms by mail, which enabled scammers to divert people’s mail long enough to steal most of their financial data and perpetrate massive banking and credit card fraud, and more recently, identity theft.

Today the Postal Service does notify both old and new addresses before completing the change of address, at least alerting potential victims in advance. Once mail has been received at a mail drop, however, the Postal Service will no longer forward it or recognize a change of address. Your mail STAYS at the mail drop, to be handled according to YOUR instructions. Your mail is SAFER at a mail drop.

### **Privacy**

The outside envelope or covering of each piece of mail reveals a lot of information relating to the person to whom it is addressed. The FBI and other postal snoops often conduct what they call “mail covers” when they begin to investigate a possible target. They simply go to the post office and arrange to have all the mail addressed to a particular name and/or address recorded or photocopied with respect to the return address. That list of return addresses can quickly reveal most of the people and firms with whom the subject conducts business—a shopping list of places to go and people to see.

This form of surveillance is legal since, technically, the mail never leaves “the custody” of the Postal Service. The investigator learns personal information relating to reading preferences, organization or group affiliations, banking and financial relationships, personal contacts, and any other possible reference which can be discerned from the outer covering. Not bad for sorting through some “ordinary” mail...

We include this, not because you may be a target of investigation, but because ANYBODY can do the same thing simply by having access to your mail. So why give them the opportunity? A mail drop can keep sensitive mail away from inquisitive minds.

Any mail drop worth the name will allow you to use code names, sometimes for a small extra charge per name, per month. If a mail drop will not allow code names you definitely don't want to use them. This would be a clear-cut indication that the operator is a cowardly pinhead who would roll over the instant any investigator walked in the door. He's the kind who would sell out his own mother for lack of last month's rental on the box.

Correspondence which you do not want those around you to discover can be sent to a mail drop. People involved in a divorce, child custody matters, and private business concerns are all natural candidates for the services of a mail drop.

Public figures, celebrities, and wealthy individuals have long used a variation of a mail drop by having their correspondence directed to their attorneys and accountants, typically under fictitious names. People who enjoy exotic, pornographic, or otherwise "scandalous" material wisely have their correspondence and purchases mailed to private mail drops, again, using code names. Postal carriers are very aware of mailings of this nature, so why not add them to the list of people who don't deserve to know of your private enjoyments?

People in debt who fear the imminent arrival of collectors can buy time and space by using mail drops. Their debts may not disappear, but they can move, and the harassing by mail will take place in a much more neutral arena.

Other users elect to make a mail drop their official "residence" for tax purposes, selecting states that have much lower income and sales taxes. (Nevada and Texas impose no state income taxes, and Oregon has no sales tax.) Likewise, auto insurance rates can vary dramatically by state, and a careful use of a mail drop can secure much lower rates. This would be especially useful to people who travel constantly. They are in a position to declare virtually any state their legal residence and benefit from whatever tax and insurance differentials might exist. The continuous use of a particular mail drop in the state they select will be proof enough of "residence."

## **Business**

Many businessmen prefer to receive their mail early in the day. Mail drops can provide this since they are able to arrange "caller service" at their local post office and pick up all their customers' mail for the day, usually by 9AM. It doesn't take them long to sort their customers' mail, and clients can even call in to see if any has arrived.

In most businesses there are sometimes practical needs that require mail privacy. The owners want to conduct a possible sale of the business; they want to receive "secret" trade research; they want to solicit prospective new employees; they are making inquiries about possible relocation of the business; or they are using "blind" ads in newspaper advertising for information, hiring, market research, etc. Devious bosses might even "chum the water" by running blind ads soliciting certain types of employees to see if any of their current employees is eager to leave for better pastures.

Startup businesses can take advantage of "prestige" addresses by using certain mail drops. Home-based businesses can avoid hassles with local zoning and licensing requirements by using the street address of a convenient mail drop. (Most localities will not issue business licenses to a residential address.) Businesses that want to expand their "horizons," can use mail drops in major cities to show they are "big-time," or mail services overseas to show they are now "international." An address CAN convey much meaning, especially when those communicating never meet.

### **Financial Privacy**

The address of a mail drop in a distant city can be the “base” for opening secret bank accounts, creating dummy companies for billing purposes, or for setting up secret accounts for investing discreetly. Foreign mail drops can be used for the same purposes, with the added benefit of being beyond the reach of the IRS and FBI. When foreign ID is used to open accounts offshore, those accounts are assumed to be of that “nationality,” and will not be revealed to U.S. agents seeking information about “Americans.”

### **Criminal Activity**

The hot targets of U.S. law enforcement today are drugs, terrorism, pornography, and money laundering. People who use mail drops to further these activities will receive no help from the services. Indeed, most operators are quite sensitive to potentially criminal mailings and will alert local authorities in a hot second. Anyone doing crime through a mail drop can expect no protection from the consequences. Mail drops will not knowingly put themselves in the position of “aiding and abetting,” so be advised.

### **New Identity**

The use of mail drops in creating new identities is invaluable. They can help create total separation between the old identity and the new. They can also assist in helping establish the “age” of the new identity by serving as a conduit for old school and employment “records.”

People who want to take on a new identity in the future can take their time and begin compiling their “history” in advance of the time they wish to slip totally into the new identity. The one major requirement for this task is that they **KEEP THEIR MOUTHS SHUT**. Arranging for a mail drop to retain sensitive papers under a special code name is a very discreet way to ensure ultimate success.

## **What a Mail Drop Can Do for You**

The following list of services should give you a broad, yet detailed view of what most mail drops can offer their customers. While some have kept somewhat to the obvious business of mail receiving and handling, many others have expanded into areas of special interest to small, startup businesses. See if any of these services would be of help to you.

- No waiting time for a private mailbox.
- You can use their street address as your own.
- You can use code names, or your business names to receive mail.
- You can call the mail drop to see if you have any mail (and they will likely tell you where it's from, if you ask).
- You can access your mail 24 hours a day at most services.
- You can receive and ship via UPS, FedEx, and other shippers.
- You can have your mail forwarded (or kept) as you require. This means even remailing under another name if you request it.
- You can keep your actual residence secret, since the mail drop is not required to reveal it to non-law enforcement agents. If you use a Post Office box for commercial purposes, however, the Postal Service **WILL** reveal your address to anyone who asks, even if it is

your residence. Some people will use their prior residence (or even a fictitious one) when setting up service at a mail drop—just in case. The truly cautious will use the address of some other mail drop.

- The Postal Service requires Form 1583 (Application for Delivery of Mail Through Agent) to be used by mail drops and it asks for two forms of ID. While we do not suggest using fake ID, it could be used since the application is never “checked out.” One copy goes to the Post Office and the other stays with the mail drop. ONLY if the customer becomes the target of a criminal inquiry will the information on the application be reviewed. New rules effective April 1999 require the presenting of a photo ID by the applicant to open or renew service.
- IMPORTANT NOTE: For the application to be accepted, the “home (or business) address” will have to be the same as that shown on the drivers license, which can actually be a P.O. Box, other MFS, or out-of-state. If the indicated address matches the ID, the Postal Service considers this “verified.” The MFS can also accept applications from a distance, but the signature will have to be notarized.
- Having a distant mail drop remail your letters from their location can give correspondents the idea that you are out of the area, perhaps on an extended vacation. If they are mailed from a distant foreign country, you could create the notion that you may never return...
- Here’s a short list of some of the business-related services now offered at many mail drops: Typing; Resumes; Copying (including color); Notary; Printing; Business cards; Fax sending/receiving; Telegrams; Western Union and Moneygram; Desktop publishing; Legal forms; Newsletter publishing; Rubber stamps; Secretarial services; Word processing; Spanish translation in border areas.
- Mail drops can serve as a form of “safe-deposit” since you can mail to yourself and instruct them to hold all mail until further instructions.
- Many mail drops also have sideline businesses that can be useful to their customers: Locksmithing and key duplication; Accounting and tax services; Passport photos; Office supplies; Packaging and shipping supplies; Gifts and postcards.
- In situations such as divorce and change of identity mail drops can offer the advantage of having time and space—in advance. Planning for the “event” is easier when correspondence remains secure and arrangements are made without the pressures of a crisis. Further, the step into a new identity or lifestyle is much easier when such matters as bank accounts, trusts, title to property, and background data have been secured in advance.

### **How to Find a Mail Drop that’s Right for You**

Here is a checklist of considerations for choosing a mail drop for your mailing and privacy needs. Some of the items may not pertain to your situation, but you should realize most are intended for your own protection. Consider them “good form.”

- Your local Yellow Pages may list other mail drops besides those listed in our own *Eden Directory of Private Mail Drops*. We have confirmed the services of all the mail drops listed in our Directory, but there are new services starting up all the time.

- Private mail drops do charge more for their service than the Post Office, but you have already discovered the many shortcomings of a simple P.O. Box. You do get what you pay for, and these services can offer a world of advantages, as we've explained.
- If the operator of a mail drop will not let you use code names or a variety of business names, end the conversation and look for one who will. You can use code names, and they are legal. Technically, anything addressed to your address is your mail. The only requirement under the new rules is that the applicant present acceptable photo ID in opening the account, and that the ID shows the same "residence" as that put on the application. A parent can also list the names of "minor children" without having to present ID for them.
- Use only mail drops with street names that you can use as your own. If they operate only out of a P.O. Box, what's the advantage? They will still have to have a business address, so why aren't they letting you use it, too?
- If it suits your purposes open the account with a fake name and address, backed up with fake ID of course. This is easier to do than you might imagine. If you are applying from a distance, the application (notarized) will be handled by mail, all the easier for supplying the requested ID.
- Pay for services by cash or money order, but certainly not with your personal check. If you mail in the fees you can use Postal money orders (cheap and anonymous), and write in only the payee (mail drop) name. Keep the receipt should it be needed.
- Choose the physical location of the mail drop with an eye out for a possible "stake-out." Can someone easily observe all comings and goings? Visit the box at odd hours, never on a schedule. Choose a service with a 24-hour lobby. When approaching and picking up your mail, BE OBSERVANT. If someone seems to be just standing around, and that bothers you, it might be best to come back some other time to get your mail.
- Be wary of strange-colored or odd-shaped packages, and certainly anything you were not expecting to receive. These may be "decoy" items that a snoop has sent you to enable him to identify you and track you as you leave the place where you picked it up. Don't take home a "Trojan Horse."
- You may be asked to sign some kind of "signature register" by which the MFS will be authorized to pick up "Restricted Delivery" mail, such as Certified, Express and Merchandise Receipt. If this is no problem for you go ahead and fill in Box 6 of the 1583, and save yourself a trip to the post office. The MFS will still not be able to pick up Registered, COD or Insured mail for you. This is called "accountable" mail and can only be picked up in person by the addressee at the post office. If you wish to maintain control over delivery of "Restricted" mail, by all means tell the operator and refuse to give them permission to pick it up for you. Leave Box 6 blank.
- The location of the mail drop should offer lots of open parking, easy access and an "open" exposure such that you could drive by first to see if anything seems unusual or potentially threatening. Pick up your mail fast and leave. Never "hang around" reading your mail, and never throw any "junk" mail in their trash, either. One of your "names" might be on it, just what a snoop might be looking for!
- Select a mail drop that has been in business for several years at least. All the services listed in our Directory have been in business five years or more, and are likely to remain

in business. You do not want important mail stamped "Unable to Forward" because some fly-by-night operator became tired of the business.

- When you do have occasion to have direct contact with the operator, ALWAYS be polite. Problems and misunderstandings can arise in any relationship, but the operator should know you as a courteous and understanding customer. He or she (there are lots of women in this business, too) will extend himself on your behalf and not be inclined to "give you away" should a nosey, non-customer come asking. Kill 'em with kindness...

## **How to Set Up and Use Your Mail Drop**

Do not apply in person, if possible. Use a telephone from a public place for inquiries. Use an alias if you like. Avoid any connection between your actual address and telephone number and the new address of the mail drop.

Do not apply for credit using the address of a mail drop. These addresses are known to creditors, and such applications will be "flagged". Even more important, do not have existing credit accounts listed ("additional address") under your new address. These are reported on your credit report, and are a quick read for any investigator trying to find you, or look into your affairs.

Retrieving your mail can be risky, potentially dangerous to your privacy. Use care and planning before arriving at the mail drop. Do not fall for ruses suddenly sprung on you by a "stranger" at the mail drop, or in the immediate vicinity. There would be a great chance he is an investigator. Special Note: There are women investigators these days, too, and they can be especially convincing. If such a person approaches you, DON'T retrieve any mail or indicate that you have a box there. You should always have a ruse of your own, such as you just needed to buy some stamps...

Be aware of any odd packages, unexpected mail, or notices that you have "Certified," "Registered," or "Receipt for Merchandise" mail, for which you would have to sign for delivery. At the post office you might ask to see the items, but unless you are expecting them, you have the right to refuse the mail and have it returned "Unclaimed" to the sender. An investigator trying to tie you to the address will use inexpensive ruses such as these to "prove" you use the address.

When you do receive unexpected mail, the first question you should ask yourself is "how did they get my (code) name and address?" If it appears to be random, bulk mail (look at the postmark and indication of what postage was paid) you can treat it as ordinary advertising material. Remove the mailing label before disposing of it; never give others the opportunity to connect you with the address on your discarded mail. If it comes First Class, look out. Somebody already knows more than you might want him or her to know. Be especially aware of any letters offering some kind of "too-good-to-be-true" proposition. Cops use "con games" themselves to catch parole violators, etc., by telling the lucky recipient he has won some fantastic prize, or inherited a large estate from an unknown relative. Don't bite.

You might consider using a second mail drop as another barrier between you and your correspondents. Mail drops will forward your mail as you request, even out of the country. You just have to pay postage and their fees. People who want others to think they have departed for good will use a foreign mail drop as their known "forwarding address." This mail

drop will then be instructed to remail any items back to the second mail drop, likely still near home. Foreign mail drops tend to be very protective of their customers' needs for privacy and discretion, and will cooperate accordingly. There are many variations on this theme, but the idea may appeal to you, and you will be able to arrange service to suit your needs exactly.

As soon as possible you will want to "test" the mail drop by mailing various items to yourself to see how they handle the mail. If you are asking for special handling, such as forwarding overseas, holding the mail, or remailings under new code names, you will want to be sure they are following your instructions accurately and reliably.

Be a good customer by paying on time and not getting involved in conflicts with the operator. They tend to remember nasty people very well. If you are using a foreign drop as a cover it would be prudent to make any transactions "match" your address by using foreign money orders, postage, etc. The operators of foreign drops are very accommodating, and will be able to do this for you.

Remember that the purpose of using a mail drop is to keep your personal affairs private. Be alert for possible intrusions, and don't ignore them. If you start to smell doggie-doo, maybe there's a dog nearby.

### **Special Note on Mail Boxes, Etc.**

Do you like McDonald's? Do you like knowing that your Big Mac and fries will always taste the same no matter which McDonald's you choose? If you do, the mail drop for you might be one of the more than 3,000 locations of MAIL BOXES, ETC. These franchised services can be found in probably all the larger towns in the U.S., and will be easy to find in both the White Pages and Yellow Pages of local telephone directories.

Should you select a Mail Boxes Etc. to handle your mail you will find that they typically provide a full range of services, and have a shop full of additional items to sell you or otherwise assist with your mailing and shipping.

The franchises for Mail Boxes Etc. are the most expensive to obtain, and undoubtedly require certain levels of "cooperation" with headquarters. While we don't want to infer that this chain of mail drops is in any way unacceptable to our readers, it seems only fair to question how much "independence" and "independence of mind" the operator of such a franchise is capable of exercising, especially in areas of discretion with customer policies. It has always been our observation that the larger the organization, the more rigid its rules. And conversely, the smaller the organization the more flexible in meeting unique customer demands. Don't forget: the LARGEST mail service is the U.S. Postal Service, and we know how flexible they are...

### **Important Updates**

The US Postal Service announced a number of important policy changes affecting MFS operations, effective April 26, 1999. Some of these apply directly to you, the customer, and we need to detail them for you. The basic thrust of the new rules is ostensibly to make users of MFS services more "visible," that is, less able to "hide" behind the address of an MFS. Let us explain the most important new regulations.

First, all new and continuing customers have to complete a new Form 1583—with ID. Customers who are "away" can submit notarized forms. The purpose is to "revalidate" customer names with ID. So long as the person submitting, and signing, the 1583 can show ID

tied to the home or business address shown on the 1583, he can also include other names to receive mail. A copy of the 1583 is kept at the MFS and another is submitted to the local post office. If any changes are later made, a new 1583 will have to be completed. *The only "verification" is by determining if the ID address and that shown on the 1583 are the same.* The post office doesn't care if the addresses are out-of-state, post office boxes, or those of another MFS. Just match the ID, folks.

The Postal Service is now requiring that MFSs be responsible for customers' mail for six months after service is ended. After six months mail can be refused if it is returned to the Postal Service the next day. So what happens to your mail during the six months after your service is terminated? First, the MFS will not be required to forward it to you, but neither can it return it to the Postal Service. It would seem that the burden will be on you to "bail out" any mail you might receive during this time by arranging with the operator for delivery, which at the very least will include additional postage for forwarding. If the customer fails to claim the mail after six months, it would seem that the operator will simply return it to the Postal Service marked,

Undeliverable  
Commercial Mail Receiving Agency  
No Authorization to Receive Mail for this Addressee

Finally, in late 1999 it almost became a regulation from the Postal Service that all users of MFSs would have to include the designation "PMB #123" on all their mail, or it would not be turned over to the MFS for delivery. Thankfully, privacy groups of various kinds, including organizations devoted to protecting battered women, took the USPS to task on this before Congress, and the regulation was rescinded. It seems there are far too many legitimate uses for postal privacy that the use of "PMB" marked mail would have undermined. The postal "cops" behind the move had to back down, and MFS customers will no longer be required to use "PMB" in their address. By the way, "PMB" stands for Private Mail Box. A lot of innocent people got the notion it stood for Prisoner Mail Box...

Important Note: Even today many MFS operators are not aware of this development, and will ask that you use PMB on your mail. Gently but firmly tell them this use is no longer a requirement. You can use it, of course, but why? Better to use the street number of the MFS followed by your "Suite #", or "#1234."

In case the Postal Service tries some other way to smoke out and embarrass users of mail drops, here are some ways to maintain the privacy and security you want.

1. The simplest way to redirect your mail would be to put "in care of" (c/o) after your code name and use the name and address of a cooperating friend, relative, business or other entity that already receives mail at an address convenient to you. The biggest problem with this practice is that the person could be put on the spot by someone inquiring about your code name. If you used this technique, at least provide the person with a good reason why you need to have your mail left there, such as you're always traveling due to your work (sales, musician, military, etc.)

2. You could avoid the PMB designation all together by using a foreign MFS. Have your mail sent out of the country under your code name, and instruct the foreign MFS to send it to you inside a new envelope addressed to your current name and address. You will find that

foreign services, often called “accommodation” services, are very reliable and discreet, and will follow your instructions precisely.

3. Since you do not want to have your code name associated with your home address, what you need is another physical address. The easiest would be to make arrangements with a company in your area offering “mini offices.” They are sometimes called “secretarial services” as well. Besides offering the availability of actual office space (not much!), a “conference room,” telephone/faxing services, and even an on-location live secretary, these companies provide you with a mail box at which you can receive mail. These companies are not MFSs because they do not pick up your mail for you at the post office. Rather, the local postal carrier has to trot over to your location and bring the mail to you—at the street address, and in whatever name happens to go with the box you are using. Of course these services are going to cost more than an MFS, but if your needs are great enough, they can indeed provide the privacy and security you need. And don’t forget, since you will be a “company,” the names can be as numerous and changing as you wish. If the mail is addressed to that location, the Postal Service will deliver it, addressed as you wish, with no “PMB.”

## Chapter 5

### Making Money

*“Cash Speaks All Languages” --the Author*

Once you’ve landed in your new place, and assuming you don’t have an inexhaustible source of cash, you will soon need to find ways to make money for your support. You are likely now using a new name, too, with no immediate “records,” “references,” or educational diplomas, degrees, etc. You might even begin to panic when you realize your old Social Security Number is not going to help you in your new life. But remember the reason you disappeared in the first place was to get away from all the things that were ultimately tied to that number, so it’s understandable that it has to be cut off too. And, jolly good! After all, aren’t we after the freedom of a new start in life by leaving a LOT of stuff behind? We think Kris Kristofferson said it best in a line from *Me and Bobby Magee*....“Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.”

So here you are, at this truly existential moment in your life, wondering what to do from this point on. You might already have the answer, of course, since one of the reasons you decided to leave was so you could do something else, right? But then again, the stress of leaving might have been less than remaining where you were, and you simply didn’t take the time to consider how you would make a living. Not to worry! As the Taoists believe, “When one door closes, two doors open.” No matter where you are in America, if you will take the time to think and look around you, you will find opportunities waiting. If this weren’t true, disappearing would not be a possibility. The opportunities are always there, and you will find them if you look.

Let’s get down to the specifics of making money. As we see it, there are four general ways you can support yourself:

1. Live off your own cash, property, or other assets that you can sell, trade, or invest.
2. Live off another person, or persons, as a companion, lover, or provider of other immediate personal services.
3. “Get a job,” even with no SSN, credit, or references.
4. Start your own business based on your skills and the needs of the community.

## Living Off What You Have

How nice it would be if we could live off our accumulated wealth, making the money we required for everyday living simply by selling what we have, exchanging unwanted items for those we need, or redirecting our investments to provide for continued support. There really are people who live this way, but we probably won't be running into them any time soon. They tend to be very discreet, even secretive, and value their privacy to the point of being virtually invisible.

Obviously, these folks are wealthy and they intend to stay that way. In a sense we might say they have "escaped" the everyday world that vexes most people, but they, too, have problems of their own. In fact, some of these wealthy types actually "suffer" from the anxieties of losing their wealth, becoming the targets of criminals, or being sued in endless lawsuits. They go to great lengths to remove their wealth to safe places, into trusts and secret accounts where vindictive relatives or associates cannot take it from them. They are particularly fond of "going offshore" for purposes of escaping all kinds of domestic tribulations. If you are a member of this crowd you already have attorneys, accountants, private bankers and other advisors working to protect your wealth.

We won't belabor the point that wealth is a fine way to go, but you should realize it brings challenges and demands of its own, some of which can be just as burdensome as "ordinary" problems. Indeed, we've all heard stories of rich persons shunning their wealth in order to enjoy the "simple" life, right? Perhaps it's all a matter of which end of the telescope you're looking through... Actually, it's said that the great Lord Buddha was actually a very wealthy prince who tired of the royal life and turned to the pursuit of religion and philosophy. He traded all his worldly possessions for a robe, a sleeping mat, and a begging bowl. The rest is history.

If you would like to learn more about options for the rich, Eden Press offers an extensive collection of books and reports on "offshore privacy." Our descriptions of these publications in our Privacy Catalog or on our website will give you a good idea of the concerns these folks have and the more useful options they can pursue to maintain and enjoy their wealth.

If you are not quite in the "wealthy" category, but do have property and assets of value that could help support you in another life, you will definitely want to be able to dispose of them or otherwise convert them into cash or income. You can arrange sales of personal property well in advance of your disappearance, of course, and stash the cash. Garage sales and "for sale" ads in the local newspaper or freebie "shopper" circulars can do the trick.

If you have quite a lot of personal items you might want to store them in a public storage facility until such time you can return to regain them safely and quietly. These places tend to be discreet and are happy to accept a year's rent in advance in cash or money order under any name you want. (Use a fictitious "company" name for the registration.) You get to put your own lock on the storage unit, too. Keep any records safely in your possession, out of sight of anyone, and certainly don't tell others what you're doing. If you have a "moving day" for taking things to your facility, and someone curiously asks what you're up to, just say you're "donating some old stuff to an impoverished nephew who recently got married and is still looking for a job..." They won't want to know more, and will think you're quite a saint.

If you own extra automobiles the easiest way to dispose of them is selling them to a “buy only” dealer. You may not get top dollar, but you will have a completed sale in minutes, not weeks. Check the Yellow Pages under “Auto Dealers” and you will find their ads. Private party sales on your own can be tricky. Pursue this avenue only if you’ve had experience at it and have the time to run ads and deal with the “lookie-loos, tire-kickers, and, yes, con artists and thieves. If you’re planning a disappearance your thinking and energy should be better directed than trying to become a car salesman.

If you are still making payments on the car, or it’s on lease, the best advice is not to try taking it with you. Of course you could arrange a “dummy” sale or transfer to yourself under another name, but vehicle registration records are well documented and maintained by all the states’ motor vehicle departments. They are ALL accessible by any investigator or private party who has the most basic information to make an inquiry. Your car can be tracked a lot easier than you can. In disappearing, part with your car and find a new one later on. MUCH safer.

(NOTE: We don’t want to suggest any criminal activity here, but we’ve heard many stories of people driving their cars to Mexico and making quick sales for cash. Whether these cars are paid for or not, or are on a lease, has never seemed to be of any interest to the local buyers. The happy sellers just walk back across the border as weekend shoppers with a few garish souvenirs, and return home.

SECOND NOTE: To add to the “profits,” some of these sellers will even claim their cars have been “stolen,” file the necessary police reports, and make claims for reimbursement with their insurance company. These operators are essentially criminals who are scamming the insurance companies. The insurance company investigators aren’t all stupid, of course, and they do realize what’s going on—they just can’t catch them all or even prove their cases. On the outside chance some investigator should discover what you had done, however, it could put a nasty twist in your plans for disappearing into a new life. It might be best to leave crime to the criminals...)

If you own real estate you obviously can’t “take it with you” but you won’t want to abandon your equity in it, either. Everyone knows the old legal saying, “Possession is nine-tenths of the law.” But few know what the other “tenth” is: Legal Title. Even if your property is mortgaged, YOU have the legal title to it. Legal title basically gives YOU the right to sell or transfer the property, or generally do with it as you wish.

At this point we want to advise you that there are many legal considerations regarding your ownership of “real property” (real estate). If you have been a property owner long you are already aware of things like property taxes, special assessments, required insurance, nuisance abatement, any special “rights,” as well as the need for ongoing maintenance and repairs. We are not offering here, however, to give legal advice on real estate or pretending to be experts on real estate in every state. As you might expect, each state has its own wrinkles in the area of real estate law, and you would be well advised to seek competent legal counsel if you have specific legal questions.

What we do want to point out are some practical considerations regarding your ownership that you will want to take into account as you disappear into another life. We will suggest some possibilities that could benefit you down the road, and you might want to begin implementing them before you disappear.

The first thing to understand is that attorneys have many qualities and purposes. The most popular image of them is probably that they are heartless, bloodsucking wolves devoid of any human conscience. To which you might add their practiced ability to lie, twist the truth, or otherwise turn anything you say against you. These “qualities” are exactly what they need, of course, when they are after you because someone paid them to do so. In other words, someone hired them to do something to you (criminal), or get something from you (civil.) This is an oversimplification, we realize, but this is how attorneys get the job done, by using skilled techniques and legal justifications to make you do something you might otherwise prefer not to do. Most people find all this less than admirable because they are usually the targets of attorneys’ efforts.

But if attorneys can persuade juries that “black is white,” and “wrong is right,” we can tell you that these venal creatures can be your best friends in the world if you just look at them from a different angle. You saw yourself as a victim and the attorney as the oppressor only because someone paid him to attack you. What if you turned the tables and you paid an attorney to “attack” someone else? What if you made an attorney your own “hired gun” to go after what you wanted? What if he became your attack dog? You know the answer—you CAN!

Wealthy individuals and large companies have always used attorneys to “represent” them in order to beat down threats, cover up potential embarrassments, and in general LIE to suit their advantage. But the rest of us can use attorneys, too, in ways that suit our own advantage. All you have to do is know what you want done, present this to a (reasonably) competent attorney, and pay him to proceed. If he can achieve your objective without jeopardizing his license to practice, you will get the results you seek. It’s as simple as that.

So why are we saying all this? The answer should be clear: An attorney could well be the key to handling some very tricky aspects of your disappearance. The situation is straightforward: Even if you “leave,” your real estate will continue to sprout weeds. It ain’t going with you. Your objective, however, is not to lose your legal title that enables you to “benefit” from the property, such as by renting it out, developing it, selling it, or transferring it in some way that will continue to benefit you.

**SOLUTION:** What you need to do is use an attorney as your “front,” or more properly, your “representative” for handling your legal affairs (including real estate) once you’ve “left the building.” Attorneys have NO problem acting as your agent, even secret agent, once you give them a proper “Power of Attorney” to conduct your affairs, in your present name, and on your behalf. What this means in practice is that you give your attorney the authority (specified in the Power of Attorney) to do what you want him to do. He can negotiate for you, act as your agent in dealing with any aspect of your real estate or other “legal title” matters, and in a thousand other ways keep others away from you. To give attorneys their due, we will admit they are very skilled at knowing when to keep their mouths shut, and this will always work to your advantage. Once those you’ve left behind realize they will have to deal with your legal representative, most will lose the will to fight. Only if you’re “worth going after” will they use legal talent of their own, but even at that the other side knows it won’t have it easy. Are you beginning to get the picture?

Beyond this somewhat dramatic portrayal, however, is the really valuable contribution attorneys can make to your peace of mind after you’ve left town. It’s also incredibly boring. To protect your property rights and otherwise assure you that you will be able to control your

property once you've disappeared, your attorney will begin talking about your will, effective estate planning, and the establishment of one or more types of trust. You'll get a speech filled with arcane language—along with an estimate of his fees—and an opportunity to gauge whether or not he will be diligent as your agent and representative. Again, we are not going to provide the legal details of these very useful devices for asset protection (many vary by state), but simply share with you the notion that a (competent) attorney can advise you what steps should be taken and prepare and file all necessary documents on your behalf. You will then be able to disappear into a new life (he might just be a bit envious himself!), knowing your “hired gun” will now do anything you authorize him to do on your behalf.

You shouldn't find any of this surprising. Attorneys have always been the fighting dogs for the wealthy, who typically don't want to be “bothered” by the rest of us. Celebrities of all kinds almost always have agents who “speak for their clients,” and keep them unavailable to the general public. The most successful agents are typically attorneys, too... So, get with the program and use the technique proven best for protecting privacy, property, and peace of mind. Before you disappear, choose an attorney who will be able to handle your affairs to your liking. Give him the authority he will need, and he will prove to be both your worthy servant and fearless warrior in protecting your new life and (old) property.

Just a few more thoughts on attorneys before we leave this topic: Your attorney can also act as your agent for receiving mail, should he be willing to do this for you. (The only mail delivered to mail boxes in Beverly Hills is “junk mail” addressed to “Occupant.” Anything important goes to their attorneys, accountants, or other secure addresses.) You can instruct him to remail under any other name you choose, of course, or simply box it up for you once a month and ship it UPS. You can also have him mail letters on your behalf using his address and letterhead, if you want recipients to get the message you're no longer available. Finally, your attorney can also serve as friendly “eyes and ears” in the on-going effort to maintain your privacy and protect your property. He will serve as an early warning system should events present possible threats.

Finally, from real life, don't forget the story of Howard Hughes, the multi-billionaire target of potentially endless litigation, who was able to create such security through attorneys and others that NO ONE got to him. He kept his money and his later life in total privacy. Period.

## **Living Off Another Person**

This concept doesn't require much explanation. In the old days most women commonly “lived off” their husband's one salary. Sometime in the Sixties, however, more and more young wives who thought they would work a few years to help pay for some “extras” found their family no longer able to live off one salary alone. The remark soon became, “Now I can't afford to quit.”

Today a single-income family is a rarity. Young women no longer expect to get engaged during their senior year in high school and married that summer. If you ask a typical 20-year-old woman these days if she's planning to get married, her response will be, “Why?” These ladies are realistic. They want to be able to earn a living on their own, whether they get married or not. Many pursue college and university educations in order to secure satisfactory

employment. Others attend vocational schools or join the military to learn a great variety of trades, many of which were once open only to men. Even though they may still entertain the “dream” of a husband being the total provider, modern women now have the genuine desire to be independent, fully capable of supporting themselves under any circumstances, man or no man.

A woman who chooses to disappear may consider “living off someone else” a necessary moneymaking option, at least for a short time. Women have far greater skills in attracting support from those able to provide it (not always men by the way), and she will not feel threatened by accepting it. Gaining support in this way is of course a very personal matter, but under conditions of “survival” sometimes people must make accommodations. We can’t recommend any particular paths to follow other than to advise keeping alert and avoiding people and places that could only add to the dangers of being “alone.”

In terms of actual “employment” both men and women can find opportunities as personal and/or travel companions. The range of duties can be as broad as human nature, of course, limited only by demands and the ability to perform. There are many older (often wealthy) folks who are more than willing to take on and support a charming younger person who can assist them with a variety of tasks and chores. Positions are advertised in newspapers as well as a variety of travel magazines. Checks for background, credit, and previous employment can be anticipated, especially if the position is offered through an agency, but our next section on “Get a Job” will tell how to deal with these.

Most men, unless they are already professional gigolos, will most likely not want to live off someone else. This is not to say our society is not already populated with “bums” of all kinds, employed or otherwise, who never find it difficult to sponge off others. These loathsome characters, however, are not the ones who might want to disappear. Why would they when everything they want is close enough and easy enough for them to stay on the couch?

But most men do prefer to control their lives through gainful employment or a business of their own. If a man chooses to disappear he will almost certainly be thinking of finding the kind of work or starting the business he’s always wanted to have. It takes a great deal of determination to disappear, the very kind that enables a person to succeed at any job or business. Heading into the unknown is definitely not for the faint of heart. It would seem almost illogical, then, for a man who wants to disappear to become dependent on “the kindness of strangers.”

Perhaps we can think of living off someone else more in terms of a transitional way to make money. A person who has to disappear quickly would find it very helpful to have a trusted friend or discreet relative open the door for a few days or weeks while he or she figures out what to do next. The “making money” aspect is the opportunity for not having to make actual money yet still being supported for a short time. Almost everyone has probably found himself “back to zero” a time or two in life, and being able to rely on someone else for short term help likely provided the breather time needed to get going again. Even the Bible says something to the effect that “a brother is for adversity.”

## Get a Job

You can go to Barnes & Noble and choose from dozens of books on getting jobs and advancing your career. All their messages sound the same, though, since they're based on the predictable world of diplomas, degrees, aptitude testing, years of experience, previous employment, Social Security Numbers, credit checks, etc., etc. But if you think these demands and requirements will keep you from succeeding in your new life, you're wrong. If you have the nerve to disappear, and your option for making money is seeking new employment, this book will show you how.

First, however, we want to tell you what we are not going to tell you about. We do not want to tell you how to find a job, how to interview, how to negotiate for salary, how to advance yourself in your career, or otherwise make you wallow in the dull, mundane, even banal details of ordinary employment. If you've worked long enough in life, but now want to disappear, you already know this boring, everyday "Barnes & Noble" stuff. (If you do want to know about these topics, you haven't suffered enough in the working world to need to disappear. You should visit Barnes & Noble—their books will help you find the job of your dreams.)

If you have just disappeared from a previous life you will face some immediate obstacles in getting a job. An employer will naturally want to know if you're qualified for the job. If you know you can do the work, or have done it in the past, and "talk the talk," the person hiring you will probably want to know if you can start right away. If the job requires "educated English," but you sound more like someone on the *Ricky Lake Show*, your application will find the bottom of the trash can before you can leave the room. If the job is essentially computer-oriented, and you know you have the skills, it won't take long to convince an employer. If you definitely fit the profile of the kind of employee they are looking for, however, all the better for you. This would include things like being bilingual; being a woman to fill a formerly male position that now "requires" a female; being well-mannered; having a very pleasing demeanor; speaking correct English; or, of course, having the right "look." Have you ever gone to a restaurant where all the waitresses were exactly 5' 5", medium build, perky, and quite gook looking? You get the picture... Most employers want employees who will "fit in" with the crew.

Once you've gotten the nod it's time for the paperwork. If you haven't already filled out an application here are some pointers to be aware of and observe. Keep these suggestions in mind, and above all don't become "conversational" about your background and personal statistics. Don't forget that an employer is primarily interested in whether or not you can do the work and whether or not you seem like a person everyone can get along with. Once he's decided in your favor, many an application is simply filed and forgotten. If you perform, you stay.

The one immediate obstacle, of course, is payroll. You will be asked to fill out an IRS Form W-4, which is used to determine payroll deductions based on the number of exemptions you claim. It also asks for your Social Security Number (SSN) so that contributions can be made to your retirement account. But since you've disappeared, how are you going to remain so if you give them your old number? Are those red lights flashing...for you? Don't forget, in the world of ID and records, the only three items that must be changed for a person to disappear from all databases is his name, date of birth, and SSN. This concept is covered in full in our

book *The Paper Trip III*, and we would recommend that you read it, but here's a quick overview.

If you are truly going to disappear you will have to end all connections with your old records, which were based on your name, date of birth, and (almost always) your SSN. If you change these three items you will no longer be linked with past, sometimes negative, records, and in a truly practical sense you will be able to start life over.

You can change your name so well that people from your past would never guess it was "you." Some things to avoid, however, are not using the same set of initials, reversing the order of your names, or using simple spelling changes for essentially the same names. Sophisticated computer programs can "look" for these possibilities and track you down. Much better: Use completely different names and initials, select names that could be either male or female, and consider the possibility of using "ethnic" names obviously different from your heritage.

You can create your own birth certificate by selecting from the various sources in our book, *I.D. By Mail*. Whatever date of birth you use, make sure it's completely different from your original. Change everything—month, date, and year. You can also pursue a "delayed certificate of birth" from actual government sources, but this process is much too detailed to cover here. Again, refer to *The Paper Trip III* for this most sophisticated method to be reborn with official documentation.

You can get a new SSN, too, if you follow the many suggestions in *The Paper Trip III*, or skip ahead to the detailed information in the next chapter. Even though the "government" has always claimed the SSN to be "not for identification," it's no understatement to say that today it serves as the linchpin for virtually all aspects of "ID," both public and private. How and why this has come about is a story unto itself, but we have to recognize and live with this unpleasant fact of modern life.

Getting back to the paperwork for your new job presents several possibilities in terms of the SSN you will be asked to produce. In the strictly "straight" world you disappeared from you used your original SSN, as well as your given name and date of birth. (That's why we call it "straight"—everybody did it the same way.) But for some reason you decided to disappear, and the reason you disappeared will now tell you how to proceed with your job application. Let's look at your options:

If you left because you couldn't "take it any longer," and wanted to make a clean break of where you were living and what you were doing, simply the new location and new opportunities will be your salvation. You've been paying income taxes and SS contributions, and aren't disappearing now just to "hide" from something. You can retain and use your old SSN in your new environment, and everything will be just fine.

The only "fly in the ointment" with this first option is in the area of credit reporting. If you have left behind some unhappy creditors, and begin applying for credit in your new location, it won't take them long to "find" you. Every time someone obtains a copy of your credit report, that request is noted in the record, and they can—and will—be contacted for current information on you. Be aware that not just creditors can access your credit files, either. You may also be giving permission when you open a bank account, rent an apartment, or apply for insurance or a job. If you could be "tripped up" by a credit file, just avoid situations that require one.

If you want to enter your new life with a new name, but with the same SSN, you can apply directly to SSA for a card issued this way. In the US you have the common law right to change your name as you wish so long as your intent is not to defraud. All states provide court procedures for this, too, if you want to make a “public record” of your name change. Read more on this in the next chapter. Women have been using the “non-court” method of changing their names for years by simply having their driver’s license or State ID reissued in their new (married) name. And while we’re at it, there has never been any law that required a woman to change to a married name; it’s only been “tradition.” In fact, about a fourth of newly married women today do not change their names, usually for professional reasons.

If your new life requires that you have a total split from your past records and ID, you would be best advised to obtain a new SSN. The next chapter details ways this can be done. This change will benefit you, however, only if you completely change your name and date of birth, so be prepared to do this as well. At the point of applying for a job, though, rather than supplying a false SSN, you could mention that you’ve just applied for one, but that it hasn’t yet come in the mail. You may want to have a “story” for why you haven’t had one until now, some good reasons for which are also given in the next chapter. Your employer will ultimately have to submit your SSN for his payroll filing, typically done on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. By the way, even if you did provide an “erroneous” SSN, it would take 30 days or more before the employer was notified by IRS to have you provide your “correct” SSN.

The final request on a job application will be for some type of “ID.” This can literally be almost anything you can come up with because employers almost never verify ID. (It’s not their “business” to verify ID...) If your picture is on it, and your name is spelled correctly, that’s ID enough. They will usually expect you to have a driver’s license from their state, but what if you’ve just moved from another state? What if you never had to get a driver’s license because of where you lived? What if you preferred not to drive, and always used the non-driver (state) ID? The answer is always the same: it doesn’t matter. Just produce what looks like real ID and that’s what gets put on the application. Where to get such ID? Check out the fantastic sources in our book *I.D. By Mail*, and you’ll find just what you’re looking for, no questions asked.

Some final thoughts on disappearing and “getting a job” are in order. Disappearing is a somewhat radical thing to do. It means making a complete break from where you are to going somewhere else to start life over. You will face many changes, unexpected events, even unpleasant complications. And most sobering, things around you will be different, but you will still be the same person—inside.

You may like adventure—disappearing offer this in spades—but most people prefer to stay put, opting for safety and security. Are you one of these? Or can you take the challenges of disappearing, a true Real Life Adventure? (Whatever you do, don’t confuse the reality of disappearing with the phony-baloney “reality shows” TV produces for the terminally vicarious.)

You might want to disappear because of your job, but this may not be a very good reason, either. Why? It’s said that most people do not like their jobs, but they don’t choose to leave. They opt for safety, security, and the predictability of a paycheck. They hate it, but they stay. Are you one of these? They hate the daily commute, they pound the treadmill of daily work, and they ultimately realize they’re going nowhere, but they persevere. Why? They have endless answers: The bills, the kids, the mortgage, life insurance, the IRA, Keogh Plan, their

church, friends, Mom-and-Dad, health problems, retirement ahead, and the burial plot that's already "paid for."

The Greek novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis, labeled these choices the "whole catastrophe" of modern life. He illustrated this brilliantly in *The Last Temptation of Christ* when Satan tried one more time to persuade Christ, while on the cross, to abandon his godly mission in return for a "life" filled with all possible worldly joys. The temptations almost overcame the suffering, but the higher truth and purpose prevailed. How much harder then for the ordinary jobholder, who has already bought the whole catastrophe, to chuck everything for the vision of a possible "new life?"

Conclusion: If you think disappearing from a life with a job you probably don't like into a new life, hopefully one with a job you will like, is somehow going to make everything better, you are missing the point. The job alone is not a valid reason for you to disappear. If it is you will be right back where you started from within a year, which is how long it takes to learn fully and begin to dislike any job. And during that time you would most likely have begun creating a new catastrophe for yourself...

We take this Cassandra-like attitude because disappearing requires more than just the hope of a new job to create a new life that will be worth the effort. What really has to change is your attitude about yourself and what you want out of life. If you see no further than "a better paying job with a bright future," please quit reading this book and stay right where you are. The job that will solve all your problems is in next Sunday's Want Ads. Don't miss it.

## **Start Your Own Business**

We believe your use of a job in your new life should be only a temporary solution for making money. The job, or the pursuit of an ever-better job, shouldn't become the purpose of your new life, for all the reasons we've already stated. And don't forget:

***The basic reason you are disappearing is to regain CONTROL of your life.***

If you don't want to do this, stay where you are. Others, employers included, will be more than happy to keep doing this for you. But if you are sincerely motivated to begin living the life you want, you will have to become able to control it yourself. This means supporting yourself independently by making money on your own. It means using your talents and abilities to gain an income from the community. It means finding ways to serve their needs by promoting products or services you can offer them for a profit. What this means is going into business for yourself, period.

Hey, what a great idea, you say. Trouble is, you've only worked for salary in the past and don't have a clue about starting and running your own business. What to do? Well, we have some answers for you.

What you need to do is take the approach used by virtually all independent business owners—the entrepreneurial approach. You start with an idea that appeals to you, decide if you have sufficient interest in it to make it a central part of your daily life, and determine whether or not it might work as a new business in the community.

And oh, yes, there's one other element you will need. It's the one quality that ALL entrepreneurs have. *You must have the intense desire to be your own boss, and to be the leader in your enterprise.* You will be president of the company from the start. You have this conviction because you've reached a point in your life when you can't stand working for anyone else any longer, having found your bosses to be unbearable, not too bright, essentially unworthy, and worse. Whatever the reasons and motivations, however, *success as an entrepreneur comes only from the drive to be independent.*

It's all in the great American tradition, by the way, of being able to start a small business on a shoestring, hang up your shingle, and make it grow and prosper. We are not burdened like so many other nations with restrictive, even punitive attitudes like "You can't do that here," or "You will need two years at least to get all the permits." The unparalleled success of the American economy has always been based on our economic freedom to start new businesses. Thousands of small businesses are started every year, with many succeeding year after year, and others ultimately becoming huge businesses. Without exaggeration, the economic success of the United States has always come from the energy and daring of our entrepreneurs.

This is not to say, however, that everyone who takes the promising road to capitalistic independence ends up rich and happy. The very real "other side" to being an entrepreneur is facing the prospect of failure. The truth is, most new businesses do not succeed. They fail within a year. Only a small number are still in business five years later. The "ugly twin" of entrepreneurship is bankruptcy. So why do people still want to go into business for themselves? More to the point, do you think it's still a good idea for you?

We can't tell you what to do, of course, but you can take some interesting thoughts into consideration. First, even if most entrepreneurs do fail, the ones who succeed face infinitely better odds than the millions of people who buy lottery tickets every week, always hoping to hit it big. They never do. They just go back to doing what they were doing, cursing their luck, but still wishing they were the winner. The truly "enterprising" lottery players, naturally, go for things like "lucky numbers," "systems of permutations," and every other rabbit-foot notion you can imagine. Funny how we never hear of these folks winning, either.

The entrepreneur who does succeed with his small business begins winning his own lottery every week! His "winnings" are in the form of profits, not a paycheck. He had the nerve to start a new business, and, as it succeeds, will continue to "pay out" for as many years as he cares to run it. The Romans said, "Fortune favors the brave." If you have enough nerve to try something, you at least have the chance to succeed. They also said, "He who hesitates is lost," which implies that if you don't make your move you have no chance of success. We don't think human nature has changed a bit over the last 2,000 years...

Here's another view of entrepreneurship most people are never aware of. Virtually ALL entrepreneurs have already failed at a business, many of them a number of times. The "overnight success" is a rare bird indeed. Talk to any independent business owner and he (or she!) will almost proudly tell you that it took them several tries before they were able to get it right and make their business work. Failure is "basic training" for successful entrepreneurs. Real entrepreneurs may get dirty and bruised, but they try again. And they don't quit trying!

Note here, though, that failure is not always in the financial sense. These folks might have struggled for years, working for others, passively learning all aspects of business, but always with the conviction that "this wasn't for them." They might have gone from job to job,

even industry to industry, frustrated and without any sense of fulfillment. What they were really after was the pride and satisfaction that can come only from independence, from being in control of their own destiny, not at the mercy of a possible “promotion.” In their minds all those years on the job amounted to failure, but failure in the sense that they had nothing meaningful or satisfying to show for their efforts.

In the case of people like these, the drive for entrepreneurship was always there, but it took years of “failure” for them finally to figure out what they had to do. The magic day finally arrives with brilliant revelations from heaven—No more jobs, no more salary, no more promotions—they will run their own railroad! And so can you!

So now do you want to be an entrepreneur? If so we have some basic guidelines that will help you no matter what business you might choose to create. But just as did with the “jobs” advice, we are not going to talk about the businesses themselves. What you need is a checklist of things to consider as you take the time and effort to become your own boss. Let’s start.

The first thing to think about is what kind of business you want to own. Products or services? What special interests, preferences, hobbies, or abilities would help you choose a business? There are literally thousands of possible businesses. Our own Privacy Catalog offers many books and reports on individual business plans, and you can find still more at regular bookstores, even Barnes & Noble. Review this literature; make lists of ideas that appeal to you, and then narrow your choices to those you feel most enthusiastic about.

One choice many prospective entrepreneurs consider is buying and running is a franchise. There are thousands of franchise companies waiting to sell you their license to operate under their name, offering you the “chance of a lifetime” to get rich using their “proven successes” in marketing their concept. Franchises are available in about any field you can think of, and can cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Good places to search for franchises are any of the “small business” magazines, such as “Small Business Opportunities,” “Money Making Opportunities,” and “Entrepreneur.”

We are not here to beat the drum for franchises, however. Of course many franchise owners are perfectly happy running “their” business, and are more than willing to provide poster-boy testimonials in the most glowing of promotional material. Some even branch out and buy additional franchises from the same company. But there are also franchises that never do well or actually fail due to the failure of the parent company or the incompetence of the buyer/operator. There are no real guarantees in the franchise world, although statistics suggest they do have a higher survival rate than start-up, single-owner businesses.

What concerns us most is the issue of “control.” Simply put, if you think owning a franchise will make you an independent businessperson, you are mistaken. Despite all their claims of that you will be running “your” business, you will actually be locked into some kind of marketing scheme that will require you to purchase from, be in compliance with, and in a hundred other ways cooperate with the parent company. You will be reminded of your “independence” daily by mail, UPS, fax, and phone as “directives,” “memos,” “reports,” and “supplies” arrive to keep you tied to the parent company. Some franchise companies are relatively easy to work with, but others will regard you more as hired help they don’t have to pay.

Another aspect of “control” concerns us even more. Assuming you have always worked for someone else—a job—but now want to work for yourself, you might find the

franchise concept the answer to your prayers. They do typically offer “unlimited earnings” with you as the “owner of your own business,” so what could be better than this? As you separate reality from the hype, however, you will soon discover that the franchise you obtain requires you not only to “do as you are directed” but also put in a lot more hours than your old job. You may now be the Chief, but you’re also the Indian, and to the franchise company you’re not a very big Chief at that. The truth: Buying a franchise is more like buying a job with more hours, potentially less pay, just as much “bossing,” and all with the added insult of their hands in your pockets as you continue to pay them for services and contingencies we don’t even want to talk about. As they say, “Investigate before you invest” in a franchise.

Once you select the idea you feel could be your new, independent business, start learning all you can about it. The best way to do this is to locate a similar business and study it. Look closely at the “competition” and see what they’re doing. How do they advertise? Do they seem to be doing well? Go talk to them if you can, and to their customers, too. Look for ways you might conduct the same kind of business more efficiently, more profitably. If you really like the business, look even more closely at how they promote new business; what market(s) they are trying to reach; and, importantly, what potential market they might be overlooking. Begin looking for ways you could do things differently, but to your advantage. Try to find a market “niche” for your business that none of the others is reaching or serving. Think uniqueness and innovation. The more special your business to your customers, the more they will seek you out and remain with you.

In studying the “competition” you should take your time. Don’t be in a rush to do things just like they do. Instead, compare different companies in the same field to find aspects of their marketing, advertising, product line, customer service, etc., that appeal to you. Once you start comparing and looking closely you will begin to see the “wrinkles” and “ugly spots” you can avoid in your own business. At the same time you will also see specific aspects that you do like, that might behoove you to adopt yourself.

By this time you should have become convinced you’ve found the business for you, and are now enthusiastic to start. Again, though, don’t be in a hurry. And don’t think you’ll need a pile of money to get started, either. The best business advice we ever had was from an old timer whose efforts built the original Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas. He said he would always “poor-boy” any new project. Once the idea was set, he would find ways to put as little money into it as he could. If it was a good idea, it would work—and make money. If it was a bad idea, no amount of money would make any difference. This gentleman was a millionaire many times over, so maybe his advice is worth considering.

You can find a vast amount of published information on setting up, promoting, and building a business. You will want to review as much of this material as you can. Look for specific ideas and suggestions you can adopt for your business, things that you feel will be the way you want to conduct your business. Even though you might read through hundreds of business ideas, if you find just one you can actually use for your business, it will be well worth it. No businessperson knows it all. Smart owners are always looking for new ideas and ways to improve their businesses. The more you know and understand, the more successful you will become. We could continue on about building and running a business, but our purpose here is different.

We want to expose you, instead, to the nature of entrepreneurship and how it can benefit you. If you follow this path, you will never again wake up in the morning dreading

going to work. Rather, you will view each new day as yet another opportunity to do what you truly enjoy doing, and make money doing it. Don't forget, work isn't "work" if you enjoy doing it. True, many business owners do work long hours, but they find this time becomes an integral part of their lives, and not the endless, meaningless treadmill of a "job." We once met a very successful mortgage broker who "lived" only for the several evenings a week he could gather his musician friends for jam sessions in the large, professionally furnished studio he had built in the basement of his impressive home. He loathed his "day" job, even though it made him wealthy, and said instead, "If I could make a living doing this (music), I'd quit in a second." He meant it, too. Let's take a final look at what it takes and what it means to become your own boss.

1. You must have a strong desire to start and build your own business. Half-hearted efforts are bound for failure. You should be so focused on your business ideas that you want to do nothing else as your "career." You must want to be the boss.
2. You should already have some business experience and knowledge of how a business is run. You can read about these aspects, of course, but your previous jobs might have already acquainted you with things like inventory, cash management, shipping/receiving, customer relations, advertising, scheduling, and public relations. All businesses, large and small, face the same problems every day, and resolve them in ways that are more alike than different. So don't sell yourself short. If you've worked a variety of jobs, you already know more than you think about how businesses are run, and you will call on this knowledge running your own.
3. Your business idea should have a good deal of "uniqueness" to it. You don't want your customers thinking they could get the same stuff at Wal-Mart, do you? You will want to appear special to them, to the point they will seek you out and tell others about you as well. The best advertising for any business is word of mouth.
4. Don't think in terms of having to have a lot of money to get started. If you have a good idea, finance it with your own funds (don't borrow!), and control it totally yourself from the start. Also, put as little money into your business as you can. Virtually all today's computer and telecommunications companies started on a workbench in Dad's garage.
5. If it appears your idea is not going to get off the ground, chuck it. As the pros say, "If you're going to go broke, go broke quick." Don't keep pouring money into something that can't support itself from current sales. Note, though, that this is a general rule. There are exceptions that did make it, but they typically had lots of money behind them, and didn't mind years of debt, negative cash flow, and endless sleepless nights. If you do have a good idea, it will work from the start. You won't have time to look back!
6. It sounds corny, but you should actually make a plan for your business. Visualize as best as you can what you want to do, and how you're going to do it. Write down as many details as you can think of. Use checklists to help you get organized. This plan is for you, not the government, so focus on things that are actually necessary and practical. And forget any "theories" others will volunteer to share with you. Your planning should be nuts-and-bolts, start the coffee, and get that phone, would you please? No more Monday morning quarterbacking—YOU will call the plays.

7. Finally, forget about using “professional” help like attorneys, accountants, and “financial advisors.” You can usually forget about permits and licenses, too. Why? Because you don’t need them to start your business—you need you. Once you get the business off the ground, you can stop by City Hall for your permit; they’ll be happy to bring you “into compliance.” The suit-and-tie guys are a dime a dozen, and can’t really help you until your business becomes a going venture. Besides, if they were experts on business, they would start their own business! Many of these guys actually envy their business clients, and wish they weren’t “stuck” in their profession.

## **Chapter 6**

### **All About Social Security Numbers**

We are devoting this entire chapter to the Social Security Number (SSN). It may not be the most interesting topic relating to disappearing, but it provides a vital “service” for those who choose to leave and start life over as someone else. We might compare it to the “portal” in the science fiction concept of time travel. Go through the portal at one point in time but come out at a completely different time. It is one of the links between you as a person and all the records and files that, put together, “make” you that person. If you want to disappear you will need to know as much as possible about the SSN because it will enable you to control your own identity as well as what others “know” about you. You can use the SSN to your advantage.

Most people choose never to disappear, and will obtain and use only one SSN their entire life. The possibility of obtaining and using a different SSN, however, opens up opportunities for leaving the problems of the past behind and creating a new life unburdened by negative records. Our purpose in this chapter is to acquaint you with the SSN, and the possibilities for obtaining a new SSN. Our information has been derived from numerous sources. You will learn more in this chapter than the average SS clerk would be able (or willing) to tell you.

Should you have occasion to deal directly with representatives of the SSA, you will likely find they don’t tend to be forthcoming in volunteering information, to the point of actually being unhelpful. We believe our information here will give you the knowledge and confidence you need when confronting them. If you know where you want to go, you can steer them to your destination. As a bit of advice, when a clerk tells you something you don’t believe to be true or accurate, ask him to back it up with a reference from their Manual, or get a supervisor to explain further. If still in doubt, ask for a written opinion. Sometimes these bored bureaucrats are too lazy to care and will throw a practiced, official-sounding excuse at you to get rid of you. Just decide you will persist until they “show it to you in writing.” At this point they will see you are serious, and probably get the manager to help you. Since he (or she) doesn’t have to deal with the public as much, your inquiry might now receive the attention it deserves and you will get results. Listen to the voice of experience in these matters....

## SSN 101

The Social Security Number (SSN) has become the most often used number for record keeping in the United States. First issued in 1936, the SSN was intended only for Social Security programs, but its use has gradually widened. In 1961 the IRS began employing the SSN as a taxpayer ID number, and now requires it on records of any transactions in which the IRS is interested, such as banking, stock market activity, most financial dealings, and employment. The trend has broadened to include employee ID, medical records, credit reports, and countless other “unofficial” applications like signing up for adult education courses or getting your kid in Little League.

Why? Our society now thrives on accurate retrieval of information, and having a unique number for each person’s many files works best. The SSN was there all along, different for each person, just waiting to be used. We have never had any system of “national ID”, typical of many European countries, despite periodic calls for such an “enumeration.” And thanks to many civil libertarians, religious fundamentalists, and a healthy helping of just plain government-haters, it seems doubtful that the feds will ever be able to implement any form of designated national ID.

In reality, however, they may never have to create an official national ID. The reasons are straightforward, and not comforting. First, the SSN itself already serves as an “unofficial” form of national ID, simply because that is how it is used. We know it was never intended to serve as ID (which would have been soundly rejected in the social environment of the Thirties), but simply as a “retirement account number.” The legislative history of the Social Security Act expressed the explicit fears of trade unionists for the ultimate unfair labor practice of “blacklisting”, which would have become even easier to practice by virtue of any kind of “national ID.” Suffice to say the SSN was never intended to be a national ID. Instead, it has become a kind of de facto ID, that is, used in practice a lot, but only with pretensions of its not being ID.

As de facto ID, however, there are many holes and imperfections in the application of the SSN as any kind of secure, national ID.

- Some individuals have obtained multiple SSNs and may or may not use them legally.
- Others use the SSN of another person (popular among illegal aliens), with or without that person’s knowledge.
- Some use SSNs which are incorrect, and may not be corrected until such time as a claim for disability or retirement is made.
- Some people still do not have an SSN, perhaps for religious reasons.
- Still others have created fictitious SSNs, which have become part of the official SSN-IRS records, and may never be identified as such.
- Finally, as a scientific objection to the SSN as ID, it has no “checking digit” which would enable an examiner to determine its validity for a particular person. We’re talking basic computer science here, but then computers weren’t around in the Thirties.

Another compelling reason why the SSN will never become a true national ID is pure politics. There happen to be 50 states with minds of their own, that will not for a second relinquish their rights to “control” their residents through the issuance of drivers licenses and State ID cards. In the U.S. this form of identification has become our everyday, real ID. We know that there are also holes in state licensing systems, but the reality is that these forms of ID

are accepted as real ID. The issuing agencies do attempt to establish personal identity, age, and physical characteristics as the basis for each identification document produced. And, despite our having 50 different issuing agencies, each with its own format, etc., a license or State ID issued in one state is perfectly valid in all others, rendering it, in fact, a form of "national ID." For better or worse our nation of drivers will continue to rely on their licenses as their ID. And the bureaucrats who issue them will retain a vested interest in securing their own continued employment.

So what are we actually saying? That the SSN is some kind of ID, but then it isn't? That the SSN isn't really that important, but then it is? Forgive these confusions, but there is an explanation here, and it's not too hard to understand. Let's clarify all this: The SSN will likely never become the national ID. Driver's licenses and State ID cards will serve this purpose, in our uniquely American way. What the SSN will become is an increasingly utilized identifier of records, which will in turn, indirectly "identify" individuals. And here are some recent developments which bear this out.

### **What's Happening Now**

A state appellate court in Los Angeles has told California residents who do not have Social Security Numbers and want to get a drivers license, "Tough luck. Obtaining an SSN is a proper prerequisite to obtaining a drivers license, and by inference, the DMV may therefore require those who do not have SSNs to obtain them." Decisions in other states reflect this opinion. In 1976 Congress exempted state motor vehicle departments from the restrictions on Social Security numbers in the Privacy Act of 1974.

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1977 requires the SSNs of both parents on any application to issue a Social Security number to a minor child. The Social Security Administration will provide this information to the IRS as part of the Data Master File to identify questionable claims for the earned income credit, the dependent exemption, and other tax benefits, before tax refunds are paid out.

The restriction on Social Security numbers in the Privacy Act applies only to local, state, and federal government agencies. Private employers are required to report employees' earnings by their SSNs, but they can also use SSNs as employee ID if they wish. They are not legally prohibited from doing this.

The 1996 Welfare Reform Law requires states to collect SSNs from all applicants for a professional license, a commercial driver's license, any occupational license, or marriage license, as well as from anyone involved in a divorce, child-support order, or paternity determination, presumably to help track down "deadbeat parents."

In at least one state, Wisconsin, the trend has begun to cease using SSNs as student ID. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Vice Chancellor John Torphy said, "Each time the card is used, the higher the chance there is that it could be lost and picked up by somebody who could use the number improperly." Other schools in the state are now moving to discontinue using SSNs as student ID, too.

An Arizona motorist and independent privacy crusader, Willy Bills, was recently stopped for a traffic violation and asked by the patrolman for his SSN. "At first I hesitated," said Bills, "and then I declined and said, 'I don't believe I have any duty to provide it.'" Bills

was right, but Tucson police, like police elsewhere, don't tell people that the demand is voluntary. The department later sent him a memo saying, "The provision of Social Security numbers is purely voluntary and individuals are free to decline the request to provide the number." Indeed, a Connecticut State court decision (1991) held that the federal Privacy Act specifies such a police demand is voluntary. For the record, here's exactly what the Act says:

"It shall be unlawful for any Federal, State, or local government agency to deny any individual any right, benefit, or privilege provided by law because of such individual's refusal to disclose his social security account number, (and any agency) which requests an individual to disclose his social security account number shall inform that individual whether that disclosure is mandatory or voluntary, by what statutory or other authority such number is solicited and what use will be made of it." (This provision was later amended to exempt state welfare, tax, and motor vehicle agencies.) 5 U.S. Code 552a (note).

Citizen Bills adds, however, "How can you effectively do that at a traffic stop when you've got a cop shining a flashlight in your face? We wonder, too. In practice, though, if you're asked to give your SSN to a government agency and no disclosure statement is included on the form, complain and cite the Privacy Act. Why not have the statement above put onto a wallet-size business card, just in case? When in doubt, whip it out!

There have been isolated legal challenges to using SSNs as ID based on "sincerely held" religious convictions. Anyone pursuing such a course would automatically be throwing away whatever pretense of privacy he might have enjoyed, but the cases do make interesting reading. Equating the SSN as the "Mark of the Beast" in the Book of Revelation, these protesters believe anyone accepting such a mark in order to "buy or sell," and thus worshipping the beast, will incur "the wrath of God." Great courtroom drama, no doubt, but why not wait for the movie...?

You are not legally required to provide your SSN to private businesses, including private healthcare providers and insurers, unless you are involved in a transaction in which the IRS requires notification. (Medicare and parallel state health plans are part of government, and can thus require your SSN.) Since no law prevents businesses from asking for your SSN, and there are few restrictions on what they can do with it once they have it, and since they may refuse goods or services if you don't provide it, why not just slip them a green weenie with a well-composed fake SSN? They won't be able to verify it, and you just might be saving yourself a lot of potential hassles if your real number were ever misappropriated by some underling in the firm.

By the way, it's only a matter of time before some firm that collects SSNs "just because", gets its obtuse butt on the sharp end of a massive lawsuit brought by victims of identity theft, who will allege that the "willful collection of private SSNs aided and abetted a criminal act." The criminal case will at least be embarrassing, but the civil trial could be good for considerable damages. (Are there any contingency fee lawyers listening? Juries will be very sympathetic...)

## **So What Are You Going To Do?**

Everybody seems to want your Social Security Number. A federal law that was to become effective October 2000, said that to be acceptable for federal purposes, (whatever that means), a state driver's license must display the holder's SSN. A state might avoid this by

requiring SSNs be submitted with license applications and by regularly verifying SSNs with the Social Security Administration. (The law: Section 656 of the immigration reform legislation of 1996, Public Law 104-208, codified at 5 U.S.C. 301 note) This new law was prevented from going into effect, at the last minute, because Congress denied funding for what they began to see as a not-very-good idea. They were hearing stories about identity theft and how this law would help open the doors all the wider.

As part of this “movement,” Congress had enacted a law in 1996 requiring Health and Human Services (HHS) to create a healthcare numerical identifier by the end of 1997. After lots of debate, and sharp differences of opinion even within HHS, nothing was done. They didn’t want to take the heat for creating a “new number” pointing out that the SSN was already the identifier for healthcare in the military and in Medicare/Medicaid. The talk continues periodically with the attitude that Congress itself should come up with whatever number it “requires.”

No matter what ultimately comes down the pike, if you are going to participate in our “free” society it seems that you will just have to have an SSN. Of course you undoubtedly already have an SSN, right? Well and good. Consider it your key to any possible retirement/disability benefits you might claim in the future, and as your IRS number if you choose to pay income taxes.

In the meantime, however, why expose your “private” (officially-issued) number to any and all just because they have the temerity to ask for it? Why not have an SSN that you can hand out to any and all, one that can never hurt you?

CONSIDER: You’ve no doubt been asked at a bank or some other establishment where you were presenting a check to provide a thumbprint on the document as some kind of “proof?” Well, to tell the truth, the print itself is worthless as ID since it will never be checked (“classified,” as the FBI calls it). The purpose is strictly psychological. The banks don’t want non-customers (read “no-account” types) in their lobbies because they haven’t been checked out, and they don’t really know who they are. This, to the banking mentality, equates with trash and trouble, and therefore the demeaning act of “fingerprinting.”

Just so, you can have a “disposable” SSN as quickly as it takes to make one up. What could be easier than creating a nine-digit number and using it whenever the occasion demands? There are, however, a few “technicalities” you will want to keep in mind if you decide to create your own SSN....

## **How to Create Your Own SSN**

You already know that the SSN is composed of three blocks of numbers, spaced 123-45-6789. These are not random numbers, of course, and you will need to know what each actually represents.

The first block of numbers (called “Area Numbers”) represents the STATE in which the number was issued. The original system began with the lowest numbers being assigned to the New England states, and the highest numbers to the western states. There are now some “anomalies” as a few states have used up their original area numbers and been assigned newer, non-sequential numbers. Check out the chart we are including here, and you will quickly get the idea.

## STATE INDEX OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS BY AREA NUMBERS

### Original Designations:

001---003 New Hampshire  
 004---007 Maine  
 008---009 Vermont  
 010---034 Massachusetts  
 035---039 Rhode Island  
 040---049 Connecticut  
 050---134 New York  
 135---158 New Jersey  
 159---211 Pennsylvania  
 212---220 Maryland  
 221---222 Delaware  
 223---231 Virginia  
 232---236 West Virginia/  
                   North Carolina  
 237---246 North Carolina  
 247---251 South Carolina  
 252---260 Georgia  
 261---267 Florida (+ 589--595)  
 268---302 Ohio  
 303---317 Indiana  
 318---361 Illinois  
 362---386 Michigan  
 387---399 Wisconsin  
 400---407 Kentucky  
 408---415 Tennessee  
 416---424 Alabama  
 425---428 Mississippi  
 429---432 Arkansas  
 433---439 Louisiana  
 440---448 Oklahoma  
 449---467 Texas  
 468---477 Minnesota  
 478---485 Iowa  
 486---500 Missouri  
 501---502 North Dakota  
 503---504 South Dakota  
 505---508 Nebraska  
 509---515 Kansas  
 516---517 Montana  
 518---519 Idaho  
 520 Wyoming

### Original Designations:

521---524 Colorado  
 525 New Mexico  
 526---527 Arizona  
 528---529 Utah  
 530 Nevada  
 531---539 Washington  
 540---544 Oregon  
 545---573 California  
 574 Alaska  
 575---576 Hawaii  
 577---579 Wash. DC  
 580\*\* Virgin Islands  
 581---584 Puerto Rico  
 700---728 RR Retirement

### Added Designations:

585 New Mexico  
 586\*\* Guam, Philippines,  
           N. Mariana Island,  
           American Samoa  
 587 Mississippi  
**588** Mississippi,  
 589---595 Florida  
 596---599 Puerto Rico  
 600---601 Arizona  
 602---626 California  
 627---645 Texas  
 646---647 Utah  
 648---649 New Mexico  
 650---653 Colorado  
 654---657 South Carolina  
**658** South Carolina  
**659---665** Louisiana  
**666** "Unassigned"  
**667---675** Georgia  
**676---679** Arkansas  
 680 Nevada  
**681---690** North Carolina  
**691---699** Virginia  
  
 729---999 UNASSIGNED

**BOLD** numbers are designated,  
 but are not yet in use.

\*\* SSNs in these areas were also assigned to Southeast Asian  
 refugees from April 1975 through November 1979

What you can learn from the chart is that if you want to make up a number to reflect your growing up, say, in New York (050-134), it would be a cause for closer questioning by a knowledgeable person if you were presenting an SSN starting out with 575 (Hawaii). Your background story will be much more believable if your SSN “matches” the area where you say you obtained your SSN.

But NOTE this refinement: If you were born (your ID, that is) *before 1972*, you are safer choosing a number that reflects the state you were in when you might most reasonably have applied for an SSN *yourself*, at say age 16. If you claim you went to high school in Oklahoma, it would be very reasonable for your SSN to have numbers between 440 and 448.

If you were born *after 1972*, it’s much more likely that *your parents* obtained your SSN so they could claim you as a dependent on their income tax returns, beginning with tax year 1989. The number you need to create should reflect the state where you were living in the late Eighties. In this case, if you claim you were living in South Dakota your number would start with 503 or 504, despite the fact that your family moved to California in 1992.

Sorry for the complications, but this is how the system is working these days. We can thank the explosive expansion of computerized, government-run databases and their insatiable lust for “data matching” for demanding SSNs of the very young. The SSN is the key to your records.

The second block of numbers is called the “Group Number.” Despite there being only two digits in the group number, *it is actually the key to the entire numbering system*. It serves to break down SSNs for any given state into more manageable groups of numbers. Manageable? Yes. Just imagine a huge room filled with filing cabinets in which all Social Security records were kept. The clerks who had to go to any particular filing cabinet would have had their job made all the easier by knowing what “group number” (area of the room) they needed to locate before finding the actual (serial number) account they wanted to retrieve. It was this pre-computer mentality that produced the SSN and its peculiar numbering system.

The group number, logically, could be any number between 01 and 99 (“00” has never been used). Further, the first SSNs could have started at 01 and simply moved up a digit each time that block became fully issued. Well, folks, that’s not what really happened and that’s certainly not how the system works. The way in which the group number is applied in creating new SSNs resembles more the work of some under-employed code-cracker working in Naval Intelligence during the pre-Hitler years. The system is bizarre, even arcane, but it was also a product of its times, and the bureaucracy had lots of file clerks to do all the searching and filing. From our perspective it seems unnecessary, but it made perfect sense to them. Shall we learn?

As we said above, the group number is essentially a “block” of two-digit numbers, which helps organize the massive files of millions of individual records. The assigning of a block number within the area number, however, follows a distinct pattern, which we can spell out in terms of TWO RULES that govern this SSN “logic.”

### **Rule No. 1: Odd-Even-Even-Odd**

Although group numbers may range from 01 to 99, groups for a given state are not assigned in a straight numerical order. Rather, they are introduced into the numbering system in a four-part sequence.

The first set of group numbers is the odd numbers below 10, namely 01—09. They are used in ascending order, 01, 03, 05, 07 and 09.

The second set of group numbers are the even numbers, 10—98, again used in ascending order, until 98 is completely filled.

The third set of group numbers is even numbers, 02—08, assigned in ascending order, until the series is filled up.

The fourth set of group numbers is all the odd numbers, 11—99.

Several interesting facts become obvious once you know this system. If you find out that the currently issued block number in your state is 74, you automatically know that group numbers above 74 (odd or even) are not valid. You also know that even numbers 02 through 08, plus all odd numbers 11—99 are invalid, too. *They haven't been issued yet!!*

If the block number now issued in your area is 97, only 99 would still be invalid. All the other group numbers would be valid.

There is no correlation by “years” in the assignment of group numbers. They have been assigned, as needed, and in the order shown above. A fast-growing state could have gone through a dozen group numbers in a single year; a non-growing state might not have used even one. New Hampshire is only up to 90, still in the second set of group numbers--ever since 1936, at that!! This means that no SSNs with group numbers in the third and fourth sequence (plus even numbers above 90) have ever been issued in New Hampshire!

Only eleven states have now gone completely through the above numbering system, and have necessarily been assigned additional, new area numbers. These states are: South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, and Puerto Rico. You can check the area number chart for the new, non-sequential numbers now being used by these states. Note, too, that additional numbers have been designated for other states, but are not yet in use.

We are presenting a table that indicates the highest group number in use for any area number as of October 1, 1997, courtesy of the SSA. You will find this information very useful if you wish to construct an SSN that will appear valid. And to make sure you understand the logic of this number system, you should study the following examples and the remarks to see clearly how important—and telling—the group number is.

Example #1 New Hampshire residents (area numbers 001—003) are currently being assigned group number 90 (003-90-1234). Following the rule of Odd-Even-Even-Odd, you can make the following conclusions about SSNs with area numbers 001-003:

1. Any SSN with an odd group number less than 10 may be valid.
2. Any SSN with an even group higher than 90 is invalid (003-96-1234).
3. Any SSN with an even group less than 10 is invalid (003-06-1234).
4. Any SSN with an odd group greater than 10 is also invalid (003-27-1234).

Example #2 North Dakota (area numbers 501—502) is presently being assigned group number 23. With this fact you can make the following assumptions about SSNs with these area numbers:

1. Any SSN with an odd group number less than 10 may be valid.

2. Any SSN with an even group number may also be valid (502-34-1234, 501-02-1234).
3. Any SSN with an odd group number greater than 23 is invalid (502-79-1234).

### **Rule No. 2: Group Rollover**

All SSNs with a given group number are issued throughout the entire range of a state's area numbers before any with the next group number are issued. The progression of area numbers is from lowest to highest. Using North Dakota (above) as an example, here is what this rule looks like in practice:

1. 501-23-1234 was followed by 501-23-1235.
2. 501-23-9999 was followed by 502-23-0001, not 501-25-0001.
3. 502-23-9999 was followed by 501-25-0001.

In this numbering system *the group controls the area*, not the other way around. In the case of North Dakota each group number actually controls 20,000 SSNs, split between the area numbers of 501 and 502. In a state with ten area numbers, each group number would control 100,000 SSNs.

New York has 85 area numbers (050—134), with each group number containing 850,000 SSNs. To date the highest group number issued in New York is 86, still less than half the possible number of SSNs that can be issued within that state's range of area numbers. Applying what we learned above, no SSN issued in New York will have any even group numbers higher than 86, or between 02—08, or any odd numbers between 11—99. So, are we all clear now on what group numbers are and how they work...? Let's hope so!

The third block of numbers (called "Serial Numbers") is simply a sequential number assigned as the card was issued. Logically it could be any number between 0001 and 9999. You have a choice here! It would probably be good form, however, to create a number that does appear random, and not some variation of your date of birth or actual number, your favorite "lucky numbers", or numbers remarkable in some other way.

Another note: No SSN has ever been issued with a serial number of 0000, or a group number of 00, or an area number of 666. Likewise, no SSNs have ever been issued in the 800 or 900 series of area numbers. The series 700 through 728 was assigned only to railroad workers through 1963, and then discontinued. A made-up SSN displaying any of these unassigned numbers would automatically invite uncomfortable questioning by a knowledgeable investigator.

# **HIGHEST GROUP NUMBERS NOW IN USE—BY AREA NUMBER & STATE**

001-003	90	New Hampshire	408-409	83	Tennessee
004	98	Maine	410-415	81	Tennessee
005-007	96	Maine	416-419	47	Alabama
008	82	Vermont	420-424	45	Alabama
009	80	Vermont	425-426	83	Mississippi
010-030	80	Massachusetts	427-428	81	Mississippi
031-034	78	Massachusetts	429-430	93	Arkansas
035	66	Rhode Island	431-432	91	Arkansas
036-039	64	Rhode Island	433-437	95	Louisiana
040-047	96	Connecticut	438-439	93	Louisiana
048-049	94	Connecticut	440-441	11	Oklahoma
050-109	86	New York	442-448	08	Oklahoma
110-134	84	New York	449-467	99	Texas
135-154	02	New Jersey	468-473	33	Minnesota
155-158	98	New Jersey	474-477	31	Minnesota
159-211	76	Pennsylvania	478-479	27	Iowa
212-220	49	Maryland	480-485	25	Iowa
221-222	88	Delaware	486-496	13	Missouri
223-227	79	Virginia	497-500	11	Missouri
228-231	77	Virginia	501-502	23	North Dakota
232-233	45	North Carolina/ West Virginia	503-504	27	South Dakota
234-236	43	North Carolina/ West Virginia	505-508	37	Nebraska
237-246	85	North Carolina	509-511	15	Kansas
247-251	99	South Carolina	512-515	13	Kansas
252-258	99	Georgia	516	31	Montana
259-260	97	Georgia	517	29	Montana
261-267	99	Florida	518	53	Idaho
268-283	02	Ohio	519	51	Idaho
284-302	98	Ohio	520	37	Wyoming
303-309	19	Indiana	521-524	99	Colorado
310-317	17	Indiana	525	99	New Mexico
318-327	94	Illinois	526-527	99	Arizona
328-361	92	Illinois	528-529	99	Utah
362-376	21	Michigan	530	99	Nevada
377-386	19	Michigan	531	39	Washington
387-390	17	Wisconsin	532-539	37	Washington
391-399	15	Wisconsin	540-543	51	Oregon
400-406	51	Kentucky	544	49	Oregon
407	49	Kentucky	545-573	99	California

## HIGHEST GROUP NUMBERS NOW IN USE—BY AREA NUMBER & STATE

Continued...

574	23	Alaska	627-635	58	Texas
575	79	Hawaii	636-645	56	Texas
576	77	Hawaii	646	38	Utah
577-578	29	Washington DC	647	36	Utah
579	27	Washington DC	648-649	12	New Mexico
580	31	Virgin Islands	650	05	Colorado
581-584	99	Puerto Rico	651-653	03	Colorado
585	99	New Mexico	654-657	01	South Carolina
586	33	Guam	658	---	South Carolina
586	33	American Samoa	659-665	---	Louisiana
586	33	N. Mariana Is.	667-675	---	Georgia
586	33	Philippines	676-679	---	Arkansas
587	81	Mississippi	680	03	Nevada
588	---	Mississippi	681-690	---	North Carolina
589-594	69	Florida	691-699	---	Virginia
595	67	Florida	700-723	18	RR Retirement
596-598	54	Puerto Rico	724	28	RR Retirement
599	52	Puerto Rico	725-726	18	RR Retirement
600-601	71	Arizona	727	10	RR Retirement
602-622	98	California	728	14	RR Retirement
623-626	96	California	729-999	---	Unassigned

## Getting a New SSN

There are a number of ways to obtain a new Social Security Number. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages, as well as varying levels of difficulty. We can't recommend any one way over another, however, since anyone's needs and situations must be considered individually. One method may be perfect for one person, but perhaps unnecessary or impossible for another. You will simply have to study the different methods described here to see if any particular one is suitable for your purposes.

### Roll Your Own...

The first and easiest way is to construct your own new SSN using the facts and data from the preceding section. This could be your "disposable" SSN to use in all the places that have no legitimate need for your real SSN. If you compose the number correctly, the most an informed person could conclude would be that your new SSN seemed to match your background and that the number is not an invalid number.

If you do decide to construct your own SSN, keep in mind the following information:

1. Select a valid area number that matches your claimed background, that is, the state in which you resided at the time you most likely would have obtained your SSN.
2. Select a valid block number that is not higher than the highest number issued for the area number you have selected. You can determine this from the chart.
3. Select a block number that was issued since your claimed date of birth.\*\*\*
4. Select a valid serial number (can't be 0000). It should be a number you can remember easily, but also not a "dead" number (see Death Index, below).

\*\*\*Special Note: This could be tricky. Even though Social Security Numbers have been issued now for over sixty years, the states have gone through their allotted block numbers at different rates, and are at many different points on the list of sequenced block numbers. Here is the easiest way to select an appropriate block number:

If your background is the same state as that in which you obtained your "real" SSN, you would be safe in using the same block number. If you are taking a few years off your age, select a block number two digits higher, for example, from 20 to 22. Don't forget that SSNs go through the sequence of allotted area numbers before the block number is changed. (You could take the years off, also, by simply going one or two digits "up" in the area number, if this is possible for your state.)

If your background is from a different state you will need to refer to the list of block numbers showing the highest number that has been issued to date for that particular state. You will obviously not select a higher block number, but rather one that "goes back" to the approximate time when you might have applied for the SSN. As you know there are 99 possible block numbers, but only those within the issued sequence for your particular state are valid. For reference here is the issuing sequence for all states:

Five odd numbers:	01 through 09
Forty-five even numbers:	10 through 98
Four even numbers:	02 through 08
Forty-five odd numbers:	11 through 99

Let's look at a couple examples to see how this might work:

**Example 1.** You claim a background from Nebraska. The chart shows that the highest group number issued is 37, and that it has now been used for all area numbers, 505 through 508. What this means is that in a little over 60 years Nebraska has gone through the first three groups of block numbers, or 54 digits (5+45+4), plus the first 14 digits (11 through 37) of the last group of block numbers, for a total of 68 digits. If we wanted to "average" this statistic we could say that Nebraska has advanced at least one block number per year since SSNs were issued in that state. If you want to claim that your SSN was issued, say, 20 years ago, a logical choice of block number would be 20 digits less than 68, or 48. On the scale of consecutive block number digits, the 48th digit is 94 (first five are odd numbers, then the next 43 are even

numbers—a total of 48 digits). A very logical choice for your SSN's block number would thus be 94.

**Example 2.** You moved to California as a teenager and soon got your first job around 1989. We see from the chart that California has gone through the entire 99 digits of the block number series using the area numbers 545 through 573. A new series of area numbers, 602 through 626, has now advanced into block number 98. This means that California has gone through the first 99 digits plus an additional 50 digits (five odd plus 45 even) for a total of 149 digits.

Again, if we average the 149 digits into approximately 60 years, we find that California has gone through about 2.5 block numbers per year. In the ten years since you applied for your SSN, about 25 block numbers have been used. If we deduct 25 block numbers from 98 (even numbers only, remember) we arrive at block number 48, which was very possibly the highest block number in use about ten years ago.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** These examples are meant only to illustrate a reasonable process for ascertaining the likely block number in use within a few years in the past. It may or may not prove accurate depending on population trends and recent changes in the laws relating to issuance of SSNs to young children.

Another way to get a fix on what block number was in use in different states in past years would be to inquire of people you know from other states who might be about your same age. Just ask them what the middle two digits of their SSNs are, and you'll be close enough.

As a final aid to any calculations you might want to make regarding block numbers we offer the following chart which simply numbers sequentially the actual issuing order of block numbers. This will make your math a bit more certain. This is the order in which block numbers are issued after a state's area numbers have been filled.

You would not want to use this number, however, in situations involving the IRS, such as employment, since verification checks will ultimately be made. Employers must report earnings at least quarterly, and the IRS has an open door to Social Security records. If you did supply your disposable SSN to a new employer, soon after the first quarter for which your earnings were reported he would receive a notice that your SSN was "incorrect." Naturally, he's going to expect you to supply your "correct" SSN. You might finesse your situation for another three months, but if your SSN doesn't fly, you might.

If you only wanted the job for a few months, however, you would simply take your SSN with you, and the employer would never be the wiser. Many years later, when you decide to retire, you can actually apply for earnings credit based on the fictitious SSN, so long as you can document its use and the earnings. After all, the SSA is only there to help!!

Likewise, if your state's department of motor vehicles isn't now requiring an SSN with your application for a license, or renewal, it soon will be. You can count on having the SSN you submit verified during the application process.

## Block Numbers by Issue Sequence

Order	Block Number
1	01
2	03
3	05
4	07
5	09

Order	Block Number
6	10
7	12
8	14
9	16
10	18
11	20
12	22
13	24
14	26
15	28
16	30
17	32
18	34
19	36
20	38
21	40
22	42
23	44
24	46
25	48
26	50
27	52
28	54
29	56
30	58
31	60
32	62
33	64
34	66
35	68
36	70
37	72
38	74
39	76
40	78
41	80
42	82
43	84
44	86
45	88
46	90
47	92
48	94
49	96
50	98

Order	Block Number
51	02
52	04
53	06
54	08

Order	Block Number
55	11
56	13
57	15
58	17
59	19
60	21
61	23
62	25
63	27
64	29
65	31
66	33
67	35
68	37
69	39
70	41
71	43
72	45
73	47
74	49
75	51
76	53
77	55
78	57
79	59
80	61
81	63
82	65
83	67
84	69
85	71
86	73
87	75
88	77
89	79
90	81
91	83
92	85
93	87
94	89
95	91
96	93
97	95
98	97
99	99

## **Caution: The Death Index**

Another verification procedure which can directly affect your use of a disposable SSN is the practice of checking it against what is officially called the Social Security Death Master File. The unofficial name is the "Death Records Index," or simply, the "Death Index." The Death Index is simply the listing of all known persons who had an SSN and who are now dead. The primary users have always been banks, as they are obligated to assist in the orderly settlement of accounts of deceased persons, and to make sure their safe deposit boxes are closed. Because banks are already in the practice of clearing SSNs with the Death Index, your disposable SSN will receive the same treatment. Imagine your surprise should the manager tell you that your number is already dead. This is an embarrassment you should try to avoid. The solution is to check your number first, to make sure it's not already in the Death Index. We will show you how to this.

The Death Index has always been part of SSA's record keeping, but in recent years there has been increasing interest by the public, especially because of its genealogical content. Under the Freedom of Information Act, SSA has been compelled to release it to anyone who can pay the price, currently \$1725 for a one-time order of the file. A quarterly subscription costs \$6,900, but updates on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis are also available. The file is available on magnetic tape and CD-ROM formats. If you want to purchase this file, contact:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Technical Information Services  
5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161  
Tele: 1-800-553-6847 FAX: 1-703-321-8199 Website: [www.gits.gov](http://www.gits.gov)

The Death Index contains over 50 million records created from SSA payment records. The following information is available for each decedent (if the data are available to SSA): The SSN, name, date of birth, date of death, state or county of residence, ZIP code of last residence, and ZIP code of lump sum payment. The SSA does not have a death record for all persons, so the absence of a particular person is not proof that this person is alive.

Of course you don't actually have to BUY this service to take advantage of it. In fact, you can use it for free, or at very little cost. There are several possibilities.

The first is to write SSA directly that you simply "want to learn if the following SSN has been reported to the Death Master File." Give them the number (your composed SSN), a money order for \$7.00, and your return address. Send your letter to: Freedom of Information Officer, 3-A-6 Operations Building, 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235. Their records are arranged by the SSN, so you don't actually need to supply any information beyond the actual SSN you are inquiring about. Since deceased persons have no privacy rights, and if SSA finds that indeed your SSN has been reported, you will receive a copy of that person's SS-5 (original Application for a Social Security Card) with that person's name, place of birth, and parents' names that were given when he or she applied for the number.

The reverse situation is also possible. If you want to find out the SSN of a deceased person, send a money order for \$16.50, along with the person's full name, date and place of

birth, and parents' full names, if known. They will search their records and send you a copy of the original SS-5 plus the SSN that was issued to that person.

About 1990 the Mormon Church purchased the Death Records Index, and has since placed copies in their libraries across the country. We know of many individuals who have been graciously assisted in their search for genealogical information by this church. They do not charge for access to these records, and the kindly ladies might just invite you home for lemonade and apple pie. They are very skilled at "family history" information, and could be a real resource should you need them. They're also very nice people!

The third area of assistance with the Death Index is on the Internet. We have not done business with these folks, so all the usual precautions would apply. You can at least see what they have to offer. You can check out these services:

Ancestry.com	<a href="http://www.ancestry.com/ssdi/advanced.htm">www.ancestry.com/ssdi/advanced.htm</a>
Ancestry Home Town	<a href="http://www.ancestry.com/">www.ancestry.com/</a>
Banner Blue/Broderbund	<a href="http://www.familytreemaker.comfacds.html">www.familytreemaker.comfacds.html</a>

A fourth possibility is CSRA, 23 Rocky Knoll, Irvine, CA 92715. They offer their version of the Nationwide Death Index, which can be accessed by telephone (\$8 per search with credit card) and also online (\$1 per search after payment of a \$25 sign-up fee).

There are undoubtedly other services providing access to the Death Index, and we would hope that our readers would advise us of them as they are discovered. You certainly don't have to pay a fortune to find out this kind of information, and competition will likely keep charges in the reasonable range.

You have no duty to provide your SSN to anyone unless there is a lawful obligation to do so, such as when filing your 1040, filling out a W-4 for employment, applying for a U.S. passport, or actually applying for Social Security benefits. Many individuals and organizations may ask for your SSN, but they will be in no position to verify your number directly with SSA. You can refuse to give them your real SSN (and they in turn may refuse to give you the service you seek...), but why jeopardize your privacy by appearing so "different," and therefore worthy of notice? Go ahead and give them your throwaway SSN, make them happy, and get what it is that you want from them. They will have no access to any "master file" of SSNs, and wouldn't make any effort to verify it anyway. Chances are they are simply asking for it because the designer of the business form they use happened to include this request, and now Susie Clerk is expecting you to "fill out the form." Feel free to give it to her, and smile.

### **Getting a New SSN From SSA Itself**

You can also get a new SSN directly from SSA, but you must meet some rather specific and demanding criteria. We will detail these below, but you should realize that even if SSA provides you with a new SSN, it will be "cross-referred" (to use their term) electronically with your original SSN. This may not offer you the necessary level of security or privacy you seek, since you could almost count on the "linked" SSNs slipping out later into the wrong hands. If your old SSN brought you troubles, it will function more like an "evil twin." You may never know when it might pop up and bite you in the rear. But we don't want to misspeak here. You

should know that there definitely are situations that justify the issuing of new SSNs, and we are providing this information directly from SSA itself.

In all applications for new SSNs, the burden is very much on the applicant to document and prove the need for a new SSN. Think of the bureaucrats at SSA as more than just “father confessors,” however. These folks will expect little short of groveling with the heart of a penitent before acceding to your request for a new SSN. They will want full documentation, third party information, and conformity to their own parameters of what constitutes the right “level of evidence.” Ready for the details?

### **Evidence Requirements**

The level of evidence required to justify the assignment of a new SSN depends on the nature of the request.

The *first way* a new SSN can be assigned is based on SSA records themselves in cases of (1) sequential SSNs issued to members of the same family; (2) scrambled earnings cases; and (3) wrong number cases. You might consider these justifications a form of bookkeeping by SSA—they just want to keep their files in order, making sure all the proper earnings are credited to the correct SSNs. Their own clerks sometimes make mistakes in processing original applications, files can get mixed, and some individuals are assigned SSNs incorrectly. The remedy for SSA is to issue new SSNs to some of these cases. If you happen to find yourself in a situation that resembles these, you can make a rather straightforward request for a new SSN, and they might even thank you for bringing it to their attention. (But don’t forget, these people seldom smile.)

If you find you can avail yourself of this number-change possibility, it would behoove you to ask if your new SSN will be “cross-referred” to the old SSN. If the error was totally their fault, such as assigning you an SSN already issued to someone else (it happens!), you could argue that no possible good could ever come from having the erroneous number linked to yours. But just for the record, the SSA states, “For integrity reasons, SSA policy is to cross-refer electronically in our record all SSNs assigned to an individual.” There is one stated exception, however, which we will detail shortly.

A *second way* to obtain a new SSN is to claim *religious or cultural objection* to certain numbers or digits in the assigned SSN. You must provide a signed, written statement thoroughly explaining the basis for the objection. You will have to demonstrate that you believe certain numbers/digits in your SSN negatively influence other aspects of your life. The objection must be firmly rooted in your religious beliefs or cultural traditions, and the objectionable numbers/digits must actually exist in your SSN.

Examples: Objection to the digits “666” is a religious based objection (Revelation 13:18, the “Sign of the Beast”). The digits do not have to be consecutive, either. Also, the number “13” can be shown to be a culturally based objection, and can be accepted with proper documentation.

But the following “religious/cultural” objections will not work: Objection to certain numbers/digits which are derived by adding, subtracting, dividing or multiplying the digits in the SSN to get a certain number or digit, for example, “999” turned upside down becomes “666”, or “2” plus “4” equals “6”. Objection to certain numbers/digits because they sound like objectionable words in another language is not a religious or culturally based objection.

Objection to the SSN in its entirety or to certain digits because you personally perceive them to be “unlucky” is not a cultural/religious objection (it is instead a “personal problem”).

The *third* way to obtain a new SSN is to provide evidence that shows you are being *disadvantaged by the misuse of your SSN*. This is definitely a viable possibility for obtaining a new SSN, but the path goes through a veritable minefield of bureaucratic interpretation. You will have to know and understand exactly what is expected of you, and the reasons and justifications which will work and those that will not work. We have gained the following information from SSA sources directly, and will now explain just how this method can be used. But first you will first have to understand what SSA means by the terms they use to define this procedure.

MISUSE of your SSN means that the number has been used with criminal or harmful intent and must be the *cause* of your problems. It is not misuse for a credit bureau to use your SSN as an identifier for recordkeeping purposes. It is not misuse for an apartment complex to use your SSN to check your credit history or possible criminal background. It is misuse for someone else to apply for a credit card with your SSN; but using only your name and other identifying information is not misuse. For someone to furnish your SSN to a police officer when stopped for a traffic violation is misuse of your SSN; furnishing only the name of another person is not SSN misuse.

DISADVANTAGED by misuse of your SSN means that the misuse has caused you to be *subjected to a negative economic or personal hardship*. The disadvantage has to be recent (has affected you in the last year), or ongoing (happened further in the past, but continues still). You are disadvantaged if the past misuse of your SSN causes you to be arrested whenever you are stopped for a traffic violation. (The disadvantage of the SSN misuse is ongoing.) You are disadvantaged if misuse of your SSN caused a recent application for a home mortgage to be denied. You are not disadvantaged if your SSN was misused to obtain credit two years ago, but the credit bureau corrected the credit report or added a cautionary statement to contact you first, and you were not denied credit subsequent to the correction of your credit report.

To make any of these claims you will need third party evidence documenting actual SSN misuse, as well as your evidence that you have been disadvantaged by the misuse. The evidence must show that the disadvantage is recent or ongoing (it has affected you in the last year, or it happened in the past but continues). The evidence can show that the SSN misuse occurred in the past but the disadvantage must be recent. Third party evidence is the information from an unbiased, impartial source other than the principal parties involved, such as the results of a police investigation. The evidence should show that the misuse of the SSN is the cause of the problem.

Sufficient third party evidence includes but is not limited to: (1) Police records/reports that show incidences of misuse of the SSN by other individuals for illegal purposes, such as traffic violations. The report must be the result of an investigation not solely based on your allegations to the police; (2) Letters of verification from prosecuting or district attorneys (not your own attorney), banks, businesses or firms involved in the dispute such as utility companies, hospitals and stores showing misuse of the SSN; (3) Letters from creditors or credit bureaus which *clearly state* that someone other than you used the SSN to obtain credit.

NOTE: All letters and reports submitted as evidence must be dated and signed by the writer and must be on official letterheads, as appropriate to the situation. SSA will verify the source if there is any question as to authenticity.

Sufficient third party evidence that establishes recent disadvantage includes but is not limited to: (1) Letters from credit bureaus or companies denying credit to you; (2) Credit reports showing negative information/remarks such as “referred for collections” or “overdue”. (3) Letters from businesses demanding payment for purchases or services you did not authorize; (4) Court documentation such as a warrant, ticket or other notice showing that you have been arrested or detained or are required to appear in court.

If you request a new SSN for any of the above reasons your application will be approved by the Field Office (any local SSA office you can visit in person). It will require the signatures of the clerk who conducts your in-person interview as well as that of a “management designated” employee. Suffice to say the SSA does not consider these requests by any means “routine.” You can count on close attention to your application, so be prepared.

The *fourth* way to obtain a new SSN is based a claim of *harassment, abuse or life endangerment*. Individuals who are being harassed, abused or whose lives are endangered by others can request a new SSN if they believe it will offer protection by preventing the abuser from locating them through their current SSN. Typically, in cases like these the victim has already made efforts on their own to escape the abuse through a change of name and address, perhaps several times.

If you believe you might qualify under this method of SSN change, there are several elements in your evidence that you will have to prove. Don’t forget, the burden is entirely on you to convince the SSA that your situation qualifies, so read carefully.

You will have to prove that the abuser is misusing, or has misused your SSN to pursue you in order to carry out the harassment or abuse, or otherwise cause you harm, and that there is a present threat or danger. (NOTE: In these cases misuse of an SSN includes using the SSN to track an individual through employment records, drivers license records, health insurance, or any process that uses the SSN as an identifier.)

The kind of evidence SSA is looking for is *third party* corroboration of your claims. Here are the kinds of corroborating evidence they will expect you to provide:

Police reports documenting violent incidents, which include the result of the investigation of the alleged harassment or abuse.

Signed and dated letters from prosecuting attorneys, social workers, battered women’s or homeless shelters, other government agencies, State or local government witness protection agencies or the penal system, if the abuser was incarcerated.

Official court records showing change of name; court-issued restraining orders based on harassment, abuse, or violence towards you; medical records of injury, trauma, etc.

Any document that can show tracking through an SSN, such as credit reports and drivers records bearing new name and address having been obtained by the abuser.

The evidence must clearly demonstrate that there is a basis for your belief that you are currently at risk. The SSA needs to document these requests for new SSNs. The letters and reports should specifically include your name, show the official letterhead of the agency the third party represents, and provide the basis for the third party’s knowledge. Letters or statements of verification and support from your family members and friends will not be considered official documents, but can be submitted if there are few other sources for obtaining

evidence. Photos showing results of harassment/abuse will not be accepted unless they come from an official source (police, etc.).

In one case a woman had to move frequently to avoid an abusing husband, and she and her children ended up on welfare since the moves prevented her from getting a job. Her husband threatened to follow her anywhere, and that as long as she was on welfare he would be able to track her. She submitted a copy of the restraining order still in effect, and a letter from social services that stated her husband had presented a marriage certificate showing her as his wife, along with her SSN, and that a social services worker had been persuaded to disclose her whereabouts. This case showed harassment/abuse (the restraining order) and misuse of her SSN (letter from social services).

In cases that do not demonstrate current or prior SSN misuse, SSA will consider requests for new SSNs based on the *extremely severe nature and extent of the harassment/abuse/endangerment*, if they can reasonably presume the abuser will do anything, including misusing the victim's SSN to locate him or her to carry out the harassment/abuse/endangerment. We will leave to your imagination the kinds of situations that might qualify under this heading. Suffice to say there are individuals who could well take advantage of this justification for changing their SSN, and for their own protection they should do so.

It is also the policy of SSA to extend protection to other members of the victim's household. Thus, if one family member meets the requirements for a second SSN and new SSNs are requested for other family members in the same household, it is not necessary to establish harassment/abuse/endangerment for each member of the household. It is assumed that the abuse is likely affecting all members of the same household, and that everyone should be protected equally.

If minor children are involved, they can receive new SSNs also if the requesting parent states that he/she has legal custody, and there is not a court ruling showing otherwise or the court records are unavailable. You will have to pay any fees necessary for obtaining copies of court records. If the other parent later secures legal custody of the child, he/she will have to request information about the child's new name (if there is one) and SSN from SSA's Privacy Officer, who will review the case first before responding directly. The application for a new SSN based on this kind of evidence can be made at your local SSA office, but the approval will come from headquarters.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The old and new SSNs will not be cross-referred on the system (electronically), but will be manually cross-referred in a secured headquarters location. The reason for this should be obvious, namely, that at some future date a claim for disability or retirement might be made, and the records of both SSNs should be used to determine eligibility, level of benefit, etc. Until that time, however, you will have to assume that the two SSNs will in fact remain apart and not available through some electronic link-up.

If you already have two SSNs and want a third, you will have to present evidence that subsequent to the date the second SSN was assigned, you continued to be harassed or abused, and the abuser has found out the new SSN and name, if it was changed. But note: SSA will not assign a third SSN just because you changed your name after you obtained the second SSN. (You should do that before applying for a second SSN. It's also good "evidence" of your need for protection.) In this regard, they will also not delete your name from the record of the second SSN; again, their reason being to maintain the integrity of your file.

You will have to attend an in-person interview to begin the application for a new SSN on the basis of harassment, abuse, or life endangerment. On Form SSA-795 you will be asked to provide the following information:

1. Your reason for wanting a new SSN.
2. How your SSN is being misused.
3. The nature and severity of the harassment/abuse or possible life endangerment.
4. What you have done to escape/avoid the harassment/abuse, etc.
5. Why you believe a new SSN will protect you.

The clerk will advise you that it would be best to change your name before applying for the new SSN so there will be no record of the old name on the new SSN. You will also be told that you will have to be able explain later, when applying for benefits, why you have two SSNs, and that you will have to identify yourself under both the old and new names if the SSNs are under two different names.

### **Getting an SSN “Late in Life”**

The perennial problem facing many paper trippers is needing to apply for a new Social Security Number “late in life.” Until only a few years ago most people would have obtained an SSN sometime in their late teens. Today, of course, parents have the option of securing SSNs for their newborns should they want to claim them as dependents on their federal tax returns. It just doesn’t seem “normal” if someone now in his late twenties, or even older, appears at an SSA office and casually seeks to apply for an SSN. He must produce paperwork and submit to a personal interview with at best a very suspicious bureaucrat. “You’ve never had a Social Security Number before...?” “Uh, well, yeah, I never did get one. Can you help me?”

At the end of this chapter you will find the full application for an SSN, including explanatory remarks, requirements, etc. We don’t want to bore you here with those details; you can study the forms for yourself. What you need most is your “story” of why you are now, at this stage in life, finally applying for an SSN.

To begin with, it is perfectly legal to apply for an SSN at any age. It is also perfectly legal NOT to have an SSN. If you have no obligation to pay income taxes, don’t need a bank account, don’t need a drivers license, and plan to take care of your own retirement, you could conceivably live your entire life without an SSN of your own. Chances are you already have an SSN, however, but now find it necessary, for whatever good reason, to obtain a NEW SSN, directly from the good folks at SSA. And the easiest way to get a new number is if you’ve never had one before, right? Of course. So let’s consider some reasonable situations why you, now thirty-something, are at the SSA window applying for your first SSN...

1. Women definitely have an easier time of convincing an SSA clerk why they never applied for their SSN until “later in life.” Easiest reason: They never had to get a job. Daddy took care of everything. (Or maybe their pimp did.) They were married to criminals who provided a cash-only type existence. They have been perpetual students abroad, and now face the unpleasant reality of having to function in an uneducated

world. They might have been religious novices who finally discovered they were not cut out for the celibate scheme of boredom and sacrifice. They perhaps only just discovered that their family trust fund was no longer solvent, thanks to their accountant making off with all the tax-exempt bonds. Whatever will I do now...? And it was only about thirty or so years ago that most women didn't have a job, but stayed home in Pleasantville. Yes, it's true!

2. Men are expected to have a job, which means paying income taxes, which means having an SSN. Why wouldn't a man have a tax-paying form of employment? First, he could also be from a wealthy family living off tax-exempt investments, for which no 1040 is required. The right attitude would help with this situation, with an absolute disdain for even having to "appear" in such a place, let alone having to "ask for assistance" from an inferior.
3. Men can also use the extended-education-abroad ploy, especially if they appear to be the "learned" type (befuddled, quizzical, even helpless). The religious experience is also valid for men, since most established religious orders do not participate in Social Security programs, and members do not typically have taxable income. A jovial piety would seem appropriate in this situation.
4. A variation of the "abroad" excuse is simply to state that the person has been living abroad for a number of years, period. Perhaps he was employed by non-U.S. companies, and never knew that he had to file a federal tax return, and thus needs to get an SSN. Maybe he just lived off the kindness of strangers who found him ("The Talented Mr. Ripley") irresistibly charming. Maybe his foreign benefactor finally died, and the family kicked him out. There must be any number of interesting reasons for living outside the U.S., and if the living was so great why would anyone want to come back just to pay taxes...?
5. At the other end of the social spectrum are individuals who have been incarcerated or institutionalized for an extended period, and whose social worker or parole officer has directed them to apply for their SSN so they can become taxpayers—at last. Again, the right appearance and attitude can carry the day. One of our readers wrote us that his Hell's Angels "persona" coupled with this "information" always got results. He would tell the nervous bureaucrat that he had just been released, thanks to a legal technicality, from the state hospital for the criminally insane. "You know, man, I actually liked living in there with all the wackos, but this BS of having to get me a Social Security Number just so I can get a job is starting to make me feel like, uh, weird. Ya see, man, I had to get up early just to catch a bus down here and I forgot to take my medication. And if I don't get my medication in the next hour I know I'm gonna get really weird, and I can't tell what might happen then, cuz, ya see, man, the reason they put me in there in the first place was I got so mad at a guy I tore him apart with my bare hands, and, this is far out, man, cuz he looked a lot like you." Stare, stare.

6. Another “inmate” actually took along his prison release papers to show that his previous employment did not require an SSN, and that now he had to comply with his parole by getting a paying job. And he really didn’t want to go back to prison.
7. We’ve also heard of people who simply state that they’ve always worked (hustled) for cash and have never paid taxes. They have now decided to “go legit” and want to do regular banking with checks, credit cards, etc. Or perhaps the IRS has gotten to them and convinced them that paying taxes is the “honest, American” thing to do. In any event, they easily talk themselves into a late-in-life SSN after inviting the clerk to check out the fine line of Rolex watches they’re selling out in the parking lot. The friendly salesman approach will be most effective. Smile.
8. A “loophole” exists in the current rules for application for an SSN. If you are 18 or older you must apply in person. If you are an infant or incapable of applying for yourself, those “responsible” for you must supply their SSNs on your application. If, however, you are under 18 and can apply for yourself, you can mail in your application just like everybody used to do in the old days. What some people will do is secure a school ID (just like it says in the instructions), a birth certificate showing their age to be under 18, and mail in their application. They will receive their new SSN by mail within a few weeks.

Won’t there be “problems” using such a number, you ask? The answer is no. Earnings will be reported, and taxes paid. The IRS will gain a new taxpayer. The number is a “real” SSN. When it comes time to retire, the person could rely on his original number (assuming he had at least seven years of income credit paid into Social Security), and “add” to it the earnings under the second SSN. Many people have worked with different SSNs during their careers, and the SSA is used to people making such claims. All the person has to do is prove that he was the same person all along. If the right records were kept there will be no problem. The parallel situation to this, which SSA has dealt with all along, is that of women who never obtained an SSN of their own, but might later claim benefits under two or more husbands’ SSNs. SSA just needs the right records to “document” the claim.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Creating New Identity**

The most useful technique in disappearing is learning how to create and use another identity, or what we prefer to call “alternate identity.” The idea of using another identity is both simple and complex. It can represent anything from using a fake name to subscribe to magazines to creating a totally different identity substantiated by official, government-issued documents. We have analyzed these uses of alternate identity based on their levels of “solidness.” They range from Level One (lightweight) to Level Three (deep cover). Let’s see how these concepts work in practice, and how you can best use them to your advantage.

#### **LEVEL ONE ID**

Level One ID is your first line of defense in keeping others out of your business and private matters. The more information others have about you (in the records they have about you) the more power and control they have over you. It is ironic, of course, that almost all the information others do possess about you is information you likely gave them in the first place! But now this can stop. You can begin to regain control of your life by limiting how much information others will have about you.

The tool you need is simply another name—Level One ID. It can be any name you choose, but it should be chosen with care and purpose. If you are now “Bob Jones”, maybe “Tom Smith” will be sufficient, an ordinary name that doesn’t mean anything in particular. But once you begin to think about using another name, a lot of possibilities come to mind. Why not consider some of these variations?

1. Choose a name with completely different initials, and not just a rehash of your true name. Using “Brian L. Morrison” for “Ben Leland Murray” would not be a good choice. Try “Robert James Trent” instead. Just rearranging your names is not good, either. Why? Computer programs used by credit reporting agencies, utilities, and landlord services can “spot” these kinds of variations and give them more scrutiny. Why not have these idiot eyes be blind to your “other” name instead?

2. Add a “Jr.” or “Sr.” to make things interesting, such as “Robert J. Trent, Jr.” If anyone ever asked, you could always beg off by saying you were the “other one”.
3. Who says men must use male names, and women female names? A man could just as well use “Allison Marie Peterson”. A woman could use “Robert Lester Samuels”. If anyone ever asked for the “fake” name, he would instantly see that you weren’t that person. Again, choose names with completely different initials. A variation of this is to use a first name that is unisex: “Pat”, “Kim”, “Leslie”, “Dana”, “Terry”, etc.
4. Many women are already in the practice of not giving a first name—just an initial—when putting their name on forms, lists, correspondence, and apartment directories. This provides some measure of anonymity by not giving away that the person is a “female”.
5. The U.S. is full of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Why use only an “American” name? Instead of your “Scott Williams”, how about “Juan Lopez”, or “Ana Montes Trujillo”? Your local telephone directory will likely include many “foreign” names that strangers would not consider associating with you. We have lots of Oriental names these days, too, which would create even greater distance. Couldn’t you be a “Jason Nguyen” or “Leslie Wu”? (In light of recent international problems, however, it might be prudent not to use names with a “Middle Eastern” touch. Why invite trouble?)
6. While you’re at it, why not add a title to your name? As long as you are not attempting to “practice without a license” there’s nothing illegal about adding “Dr.”, “MD”, “Rev.”, “Prof.” “Esq.”, “PhD”, or similar titles, to your name. This may not suit your taste for privacy, but it will be a faster way to learn who is interested in your “name” when all the unsolicited “professional” mail starts rolling in. If the attention becomes excessive, change names again, this time with a different title, or no title at all.
7. While we’re at this fantasy game, who says you have to be a person at all? Why not be any of the following “legal entities”, or simply a person who *represents* the entity?
  - A business. Use a fictitious firm name: American Supply Co., or Allied Enterprises.
  - A trust fund. All you need is a letterhead: “The Bernstein Family Trust”.
  - An executor of an estate. Just sign your name, “John Whitcomb, Executor”.
  - A conservator for an elderly heiress who insists on her privacy, of course.
  - A research facility for which “you” are only a director. The “Doctors” are in the field.
  - An international company for which “you” are the only local representative. The others are always overseas and most do not speak English.
  - How about a law firm? You don’t have to be one of the partners on the letterhead, how about being just a “clerk?” Most people still have the good sense not to mess

with attorneys who might easily turn and sue them. If you're going to put your hand in a beehive you better know what you're doing, right?

### **So Where Do "You" Live?**

If you choose to use Level One ID you would be well advised not to have the name associated with your actual residence. It doesn't take long for mail carriers to form very clear ideas about the different people on their routes, judging simply from the mail they receive. You could have this mail delivered to your physical address, but this is definitely defeating the very purpose of creating Level One ID.

Specifically, you don't want connections known or observed between you, your correspondence, and your physical address. The carrier will have all he can handle just delivering the daily mail addressed to "Occupant" and "Current Resident". If a carrier should ever ask who you are, brush off the inquiry with a simple, "I get all my personal mail at the office." Or, "The owners are in Europe till next year. I'm just house-sitting." Or, again, "I'm one of those techno-geeks who's converted everything to Email. Isn't it nice not to depend on the Postal Service anymore?" He won't ask again.

One final, very important note on dealing with any mail carrier who should ever decide to approach you. In addition to the above nosiness, he might one day appear at your door with mail that is being delivered "Certified" or "Registered". He is required to obtain a signature before he can release this mail. The sender likely wants the signature of the person to whom it is addressed. This will then give "proof" to the sender that the letter was indeed delivered to that address, and secondarily that the person named was the one who received it. So, you've just answered the doorbell and the carrier wants you to sign. What do you do?

What you do is read the following items a few times until you've memorized all these details:

First, you do not reach for his pen to sign the form. Instead, you ask him to show you the letter (he might actually hand you the letter) and you take a good look at the name to whom it is addressed, and the name, address, and ZIP of the sender. (You would be smart to write this down in a dated note to yourself for later reference.)

Second, if you are now using Level One ID, your name should not appear on any mail delivered to your residence. If this Registered/Certified mail does show your name or any other name you know or know of, you've got a snoop looking for you. He's just using this two-dollar service to smoke you out.

Third, you do not sign for the letter. You simply tell the carrier that you are not that person, and/or that you are not authorized to receive mail for anyone. The carrier will then take the letter back and mark it "Undeliverable", "Refused", or some other indication of non-delivery.

Remember this: You never, ever have to sign for Registered or Certified mail. You are under no obligation to receive this mail, despite whatever overbearing demeanor the carrier might show towards you. The sender can assume whatever he likes. He will get his letter back, but with no proof of anything except that it was not delivered, period.

But beware: If a snoop is trying to use this method of finding or contacting you he will likely try again within a few weeks. Another letter or parcel will arrive requiring a signature

(parcels will have a brown-colored "Receipt for Merchandise" attached), and the timing will not be coincidental. Remember the three steps above, and do not take delivery of the mail. Have it sent back. Again, however, make a note of the item, any names, addresses, and the date. Consider the experience both a warning and good practice for the future.

### **And the Mail Goes To.....?**

By now it should be obvious that any mail you receive in the name of your Level One ID will not be arriving where you actually live. Instead, you will have it sent to an address used ONLY for receiving mail, that of a mail drop, or mail forwarding service (MFS). These are private firms that receive your mail at their address and hold it for you, or provide additional services as you request. They also allow you to use their street address as your own. Most offer 24-hour access to your mail, and can be very accommodating in other ways, too. Refer back to Chapter 4 for the full range of possibilities when you use the very helpful services. You can also find mail drops convenient to you in our book, *The Eden Directory of Private Mail Drops in the U.S. and 90 Foreign Countries*.

But why shouldn't you use just an ordinary Post Office Box? True, the rental fees for POBs are about half those charged by an MFS, but the MFS offers a far greater variety of services and convenience, which you will find truly delightful. Your mail may be addressed to an actual street address rather than to only a POB. This alone makes your Level One ID appear more "believable", since it appears actually to "live" somewhere.

The surest way for you to liberate yourself from "list surveillance" is to deny the list compilers any access to your real name, and by extension, your address. You must begin using your Level One ID. You might look at this practice as the same as using a "Pen Name," the kind of name often used by authors who wanted to remain anonymous. "Sherlock Holmes", "Mark Twain", and "T. Fotheringwell Bellows" are all pen names, intended to create identities separate from their users. You can do the same! You don't need to be an author to adopt a pen name, but simply someone who does not wish to share his real identity with those who have no legitimate need to know it. A working pen name (Level One ID) can help you restore some much-needed privacy and control over what others "know" about you. Now that we've convinced you of the need for some privacy in your life, let's look at Level One ID in greater detail.

First, this is not the kind of ID you will carry in your wallet or present to a police officer during a traffic stop, or during an arrest, for that matter. This is a name you choose to create and use as an interface between the real you and the commercial/snooper world of list users. You owe these people nothing, so why give them something which is valuable, your name?

You are not concerned with the welfare of the list users. Your legitimate concern is your personal privacy and personal protection, which can be secured more effectively by not having your real name appear on their lists. Don't think, however, that you can somehow send out a massive "notice" to all list users and compilers to take your name off their lists. This alone will put you onto a very select list of "objectors", a red-flag resource that investigators would love to peruse. You will end up getting lots of unwanted attention, and likely from the very people you most want to avoid. What you are trying to do is really something quite different.

Let's think of using Level One ID as a quiet, personal form of guerrilla warfare. Also let's think of ourselves as mere fleas on the back of a huge elephant. In classical guerrilla

warfare the insurgents (guerrillas) choose very carefully the times and places they will engage the enemy, and then only if they have a good chance of prevailing. They know the enemy has more guns, manpower and money, but they will act as a continuing irritant, “bleeding” the superior forces until, hopefully, they lose spirit and give up the fight, leaving the guerrillas to hold the hill. Remember Vietnam...?

So here we are, little fleas riding around on the Peoples Republic of Dumbo, fearing only a lucky whack of the tail or some unexpected mud bath. Dumbo may not like our flea horde sucking their livelihood through his hide, but he’s never going to “get” us all, either. But we have to realize, too, that we’re not going to bring him down, either.

The battle between the fleas and the elephant is similar to the “battle” you are going to fight to regain and preserve your identity, privacy and security. The battle plan is quite simple, but requires patience. You are not going to “win” overnight, but in the long run the enemy is never going to know what hit him. And “you” won’t be there for him to hit you back! What will happen is this: Your new, Level One ID will begin to appear on lists because of your normal transactions and lifestyle, but your real identity—the one you are trying to keep private—will gradually disappear from lists as new transactions fail to occur.

It might be helpful to think of Level One ID as a name known only at a distance. As we noted earlier, this is not the ID you would present in a situation which required positive ID. Instead, it would be used in situations that simply ask for a “name”, one which you will now gladly provide since it will not reveal who you really are. Here are some opportunities for you to begin using—and thus creating—Level One ID.

- Subscriptions of all kinds.
- Correspondence of an impersonal nature, such as inquiries for information.
- Email messages, electronic “signatures”.
- Secret, confidential correspondence.
- Purchase of “sensitive” products (erotica, ammo, growing lamps...)
- Transactions not made in person.

NOTE: You will never actually have this ID in your pocket or on your person. Level One ID is simply a name of convenience that you can use as the interface between the real you and the person others think they are dealing with. It is the mask of privacy with which you will smile at all the list compilers, data matchers, and electronic snoopers. You will be able to observe them going about their business, but they will never know or see you. Plan to use Level One ID aggressively against these people, and you will soon find your life becoming a lot quieter, and progressively more under your control.

## **LEVEL TWO ID**

If your Level One ID belongs to a person no one ever sees, what kind of ID will be expected of the person who is seen? If you are going to be walking around, living an ordinary life, at some points you will need to have physical ID to facilitate certain transactions and appear “normal.”

Your first choice can be the ID you already have. Cashing checks, getting a traffic ticket, taking a commercial airline flight, buying a hunting or fishing license, opening bank accounts, and applying for credit cards are all situations where some form of ID will be

expected of you. “No ID? Sorry, can’t help you...” But if you can provide the ID they request, no problem, they’re ready to help. Give them the paper they want, and you’ll get the paper you want.

Level Two ID is your “walking around” ID. For safety’s sake you will probably want this kind of ID to be issued by government sources, at the very least your drivers license or state ID card. These cards and documents are not hard to obtain in new names, but there is much detailed information you should know before you proceed.

NOTE: This book is not intended to be an “ID book,” as such, because our purpose here is only to acquaint you with the possibilities and advantages of using alternate identification in situations that can benefit from it, such as disappearing. You should refer to specific books in our “Resources” chapter for detailed guidance in this area.

If your existing ID is safe and secure enough for everyday purposes, you might simply continue using it in transactions where “official” ID is required. (Of course, use Level One ID for all other purposes, when your ID needn’t be “legal.”) In any confrontation where official ID is expected, the last thing you want to do is to invite curiosity.

If you are going to disappear within the same general area your Level Two ID should probably stay in the same name, since there will a strong likelihood of your encountering people who have known you only with that ID. If you were to start using completely new ID, yet continued shopping and banking in the same places, you could definitely be “remembered” by some clerk whose testimony you might not want to hear someday in court. Don’t take chances unnecessarily. Be ordinary, and use the Level Two ID people expect, but let your private life begin disappearing from their notice thanks to your new Level One ID.

What we have said to this point regarding Level One and Level Two ID covers the needs of people who want essentially to lead a “quieter” life. They want to avoid unsolicited sales calls, they want to pursue special interests or hobbies in private, and above all they want to feel secure in the knowledge that their property and activities will not become the targets of data-surveillance and other forms of cyber-snooping. A tall order, perhaps, but clever uses of Level One ID can go a long way towards diverting the gaze of the curious, and the proper use of Level Two ID can ultimately convert a swan into a mud-hen, someone unworthy of notice.

Clever possibility: If you begin using Level One ID you can, at the same time, be creating “support” for a truly solid identity later on. Since you will be receiving mail and receipts in whatever name you choose, and assuming it’s a name you could actually “live” with, why not retain some mail and records, dated in “the past,” that could “prove” you’ve always been that person? If the phone company can accept utility receipts as “ID,” other businesses and individuals will, too. This is something to consider if you have the time to plan your disappearance well in advance.

## **LEVEL THREE ID**

Level Three ID is the ID you will need if someone wants to track you down to do you harm. You can use this ID to relocate to a new area where no one knows you, and others won’t find you. Negative records (criminal, employment, financial, etc.) will disappear so you can “start life over.” Your assets and finances can become secure from creditors, contingency-fee lawyers, and even the IRS. Domestic relationships that have made your life “impossible” will

become instant memories through the careful use of Level Three ID, the truly “deep cover” ID. Level Three ID represents a complete change of your identity, which must include:

- A completely different name,
- A completely different date of birth, and
- A new Social Security Number (SSN).

With these new identifying factors you can build new files and records unconnected to the negative problems of your old identity. The old records will continue to exist, of course, but your new life—in a new identity—will take a new course, unaffected by the past. Like the phoenix of legend, you will rise full-blown from the ashes.

The biggest problem you will face? Your mouth. People you tell about your Level Three ID will later, wittingly or unwittingly, inform on you. You can count on it. If you decide to create Level Three ID you will need to do it on your own, quietly and secretly. Hopefully you will have sufficient time in advance (two to three months) to obtain all the documents you need, and that you can orchestrate your disappearance so that any hounds following you will take the wrong trail(s). If you can take the time to plan in advance to create Level Three ID, you will assure yourself a very smooth landing in your new environment.

We much prefer the approach of careful planning and informed preparation. Level Three ID demands nothing less. This is the ID you can construct completely in private, and retain until such time as you decide to assume it “live.” You can have a birth certificate in a totally different name and date of birth, a different SSN, another state’s drivers license or ID card, business cards, memberships, even subscriptions going to a safe address.

Time allowing, you could also have credit cards in your new name, even if they are only the secured type. Actually, there are many plans for secured Visa and MasterCard that will issue cards with limits of two and three times the deposit amount, and even a few that don’t require any deposit! Having a credit card or two in your pocket when you walk into a new identity is a real confidence booster, not to be overlooked. If people had to choose between the benefits of Viagra or losing all their credit cards, they would decide to keep the plastic. Our Resources chapter lists several good books for obtaining these kinds of credit cards. It’s not hard to get secured cards in any name you want; no credit report is necessary; and they make great “ID!”

You will want to create and secure Level Three ID on your own. This project is much too important for your personal security to trust to some other person or advisor. Should you need help at some point along the way, your best resource will further study and planning. Take time to think things through. We believe our own books on ID provide the kind of information you will need most, but remember to keep your eyes and ears open. Read the newspapers, listen to the news, and be alert for developments that might affect ID and the choices you want to make. The best-informed sources on this subject are most private investigators, whom you might approach if you have specific questions. But don’t forget they also walk “both sides of the street”, and will have little trouble discerning your motives if your inquiry is vague or uncertain.

Ironically, the best sources of information on government-issued ID are the various official agencies that do the actual issuing. Give them a call or write a letter asking your specific questions, and typically you will receive back more information than you anticipated. We have found some “information officers” to be very helpful, actually pleased that a member of the public is taking an interest in their arcane rules and bureaucratic procedures.

One source you will not want to contact, however, is attorneys. Besides being woefully ignorant in this subject area, their first allegiance is to the court system (their workplace) and the larger, government establishment that supports it. Many attorneys could be said to be incompetent, but most will not knowingly shoot themselves in the foot. Their interest in the concept of alternate ID readily justifies their reputation as “deal killers.”

## **Chapter 8**

### **Living With New ID**

We choose to use new ID for reasons like privacy, security, and even a chance to “start life over.” Having a collection of convincing new ID cards and related documents is a very nice undertaking, but actually using your new ID also means living with it. Once you decide to create and adopt a new identity, you then have to “put it into practice.”

Your new identity will not remain a static or fixed concept, but rather an on-going and continuous building of relationships in all aspects of your personal world. Your residence, communications, livelihood, personal and real property, financial activity, and even friends and acquaintances will reflect the imprint of your new identity—as you choose to use it.

At the heart of this process is your attitude. You must be completely motivated to use your new identity. You must want your new identity to be used and accepted unquestioningly for the purposes you choose. To expose yourself as possibly “not the same person” you claim to be can invite all kinds of unwanted questions. Your motivation for using new ID should be to make your life more pleasant and potentially profitable, and definitely not the source of new disasters. You must be committed to your new identity, and committed to making it work.

Adopting a new identity will become a form of personal discipline. You must become conscious and aware of any and all situations in which your identity could be questioned or compromised. Your assumed attitude will be that, yes, of course you are who you say you are, “Just check my ID.” You will not want to be confrontational, however; as this would only encourage more doubt and further inquiry. It will be much better to have ordinary, everyday answers to offer, always with the assumption your identity is not in question. You’re just another person going about his business.

Sometimes people (especially Americans) are nosy almost to the point of rudeness. They want to know where you’re from, where you went to school (and how far), who you work for (what kind of work you do), and, in the South, “Who y’all kin to?”. You can expect other questions relating to your income, religion, possessions, interests, hobbies, sexual preference, marital status, etc., etc. Most people probably think it’s perfectly OK to ask such “conversational” questions, thanks to the proliferation of gratuitous banalities on Trash TV and radio, but the answers can give others far too much information about you. People will still expect answers, of course, so be prepared mentally and have them ready. Just don’t give them the answers they expect. Here’s how to do it.

It would be in the best interest of your new identity not to be very interesting at all. Construct a background of standard answers that will discourage further questioning. Be vague: "I'm originally from west Texas, but most of my family's back East. Be self-effacing: "I tried college, but it just wasn't for me." Turn the table: "Work? I sure could use a job. You know of anything in construction?" Money: "Hey, I've been broke for years." Family relationships: "Yeah, I've got a half-sister, but she never writes." Religion: "Sunday's are for football."

You get the idea. Be modest, never boastful. Have answers that leave the conversation dead in the water. Finally, never try to appear "superior" to the person doing the asking. Just "kill 'em with kindness." They will go away priding themselves on how superior they are to you, and glad they won't have to include you in their life. Be imminently forgettable! In the words of true Southerners, "Tell the truth, boy. Just don't tell everything you know."

For the balance of this chapter we will cover other "problem areas" of putting a new identity into practice. We have gained much insight over the years from hundreds of readers who generously shared their experiences with "paper tripping," and we are including many of them here. Please don't regard our solutions, however, as the only ways to handle these situations. We would hope that our readers will continue to inform us of additional techniques they find successful, as well as how they deal with problems not mentioned here.

## **Medical Records**

Health care in the U.S. offers almost a "free market" of opportunities for new identity. Unlike the nationalized systems in most modern countries, U.S. health care providers compete in a fragmented community of independent doctors, hospitals, clinics, trauma centers, and research facilities. Insurance companies themselves offer thousands of competing plans for coverage, with "government" involvement only an adjunct to the system as a whole.

The "Big Brother" of medical care is the Medical Information Bureau (MIB) just outside Boston. Their database contains the health histories of at least 15 million Americans, which are accessed by some 600 insurance companies, who use them to underwrite individual life, health and disability policies. The information in these files comes from insurance applications submitted by individuals, and is kept for seven years. The MIB never checks for inaccuracies. The only way you may find out about an inaccurate record is if you are denied coverage. You can now get a free copy of your MIB report if you are denied insurance coverage, in part, because of an MIB report. The MIB can be reached at P.O. Box 105, Essex Station, Boston, MA 02112. Telephone: 617-426-3660.

When you need medical care and will be using your new identity, here are considerations you will want to keep in mind:

The MIB does not file your records by Social Security Number (surprise!). They actually create their own filing system to identify records, and have always been outspoken about not needing to use the SSN.

When you go to a doctor's office for the first time you are typically asked to "fill out some forms", which will provide the doctor with information regarding your health condition and problems, etc., as well as "billing information" so he can be assured of payment. You can use your new identity with confidence, since no proof will be demanded. Whatever driver's license number and/or SSN you give will be fine.

Since you will not likely have insurance (yet), inform them that you will be paying cash, but that you would also like to receive whatever “cash discount” they can provide. You might mention that you are “shopping around” for better insurance, and, by the way, could they recommend a good plan/company, etc. They might feel extra sorry for you when you tell them that you lost your group coverage when your last employer moved the company to the Philippines.

Watch out for waivers. Read them before signing. Doctors (and insurers) frequently seek your permission to release your medical information. If necessary, inform the doctor that you are willing to pay directly for his services in order that your information remain confidential in his files. He should get the message, and will take steps to safeguard your privacy.

Be wary of free screenings for cholesterol level, blood pressure, osteoporosis, etc. Information you give will likely end up in the hands of businesses (drug companies included) hoping to solicit you for your health care needs. Ask who has access to the results. If you don’t like their answer, decline the offer. If you want to get on mailing lists, perhaps as a way to solidify your Level One ID, these are great opportunities to generate believability.

An unexpected visit to an emergency room or a hospital stay will result in a more intensive inquiry about how you intend to pay for their services. If you do not have insurance you can tell them it will be a “cash account,” and that you will make arrangements later with the cashier. If you’re an illegal alien, or recent immigrant on welfare, hey, you have no problem. They know you won’t be paying, and that they can tap various outside sources (taxpayers) for payment, which is what they are very used to doing, thank you very much.

If you do have insurance in your new name, great. We recommend getting an individual policy as a convincing contribution to your new identity. No verification of your identity will be made other than to see if you are already on file with the MIB, which you won’t be. To the insurance company and the MIB, you are just a new customer. The agent may ask for your SSN and driver’s license, but they will not be verified. The SSN you provide in this situation can be your made up number (see Chapter 6), and you can just recite your license number and expiration date.

### **School Records**

Let’s assume your school years are now behind you, that you completed high school, went on for a Bachelor’s degree, and perhaps even earned an advanced degree. You might want to have your transcripts and/or credentials issued in a new name, and if not now, maybe at a later date, “just in case.” You obviously want to know if this can be done, but never heard of anyone’s doing it. Rest easy. You won’t have to take all those courses over again just to get your papers in a new name. There are better, easier ways to go. Let’s look at the possibilities.

First, if you never did finish high school, you would be doubly remiss if you didn’t take advantage of the GED program available at over 3,000 testing centers in the U.S. and Canada. Any local high school “front desk” can give you the details. By passing five tests you will obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma, readily accepted by 93 percent of colleges and universities, and over 96 percent of all employers. The name attached to your GED can be any that you wish to present with a minimum of ID, which can be obtained by mail from sellers listed and displayed in our book, *Degrees by Mail*. There are also firms listed which offer blank GED forms as well as blank diplomas, degrees, etc.

While we're on the subject of blank school certificates, *Degrees by Mail* actually offers many possibilities, from strictly blank forms which you can complete yourself, to custom-designed and "filled-in" diplomas, degrees, and other credentials—any name, any school. These can make impressive wall decor, and can also serve to add background to your alternate ID. Their only limitations occur when someone decides to use them in a job application, and the employer seeks verification from the school. Big problem? Well, maybe yes, maybe no.

First, most employers never do verify school records. Inertia plays a part here. Employers simply make judgment calls about applicants. If they seem motivated and act the part, they get the job. Employees who behave unscrupulously, cause problems, or raise doubts about proper background and preparation are the ones who get "checked out"—prior to firing.

Another reason employers skip verifying education records is the sheer multitude of schools, literally thousands of possible institutions that they would have to contact. Frankly, there are more important concerns on the minds of management in general and personnel in particular. If the applicant acts like a college graduate and communicates like one, then he probably is one.

Personnel managers are typically pretty savvy about people, and will be looking for small signs that indicate the qualities they are looking for and expect in potential employees. If you can communicate on at least the same level as the personnel manager, he will assume you are also on his level (suitably educated). If some obviously mispronounced words or an ungrammatical sentence comes out of your mouth, and you're claiming a BA from State U., you'll never know why the interview ended so abruptly.

The other side of the coin, however, is that schools are overwhelmingly cooperative with employers who inquire about former students' records, attendance, degrees, etc. They have a vested interest in seeing that their students gain employment, and consider such inquiries as coming from friends, not enemies. Over 78% of post-secondary schools will verify attendance and degrees, and most of these will do so over the telephone when supplied with the appropriate identifiers. About 85% will provide an exact transcript when the school's guidelines are followed. But so many employers never bother to ask!

Back to our original concern, however, how are you going to get your records reissued in a new name? It would be fair to say that colleges and universities are almost never asked to reissue diplomas, degrees, and other credentials in new names. Indeed, why would "successful" college graduates ever want to do a thing like that? But just because something is supposedly unheard of doesn't mean it can't be done.

In fact, if you have the record at their school and you have a compelling reason for your request, they will accommodate you and provide the documents you request. You can present evidence, for example, of a legal name change along with whatever "story" you think appropriate, and they will comply. You just have to ASK FOR IT. And don't be put off by some low-level, twit of a clerk in the Dean's office, either. As an alumnus, you have certain rights and expectations that the school must recognize, and the Dean himself won't be too busy to help, if need be. The Good Book says, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open unto you." A little attitude helps, too!

The school will be concerned first that you are indeed the person in the records. They just can't have people popping in off the street copping other people's records in new names. You obviously will be able to identify your old self, but you will have to prevail in your effort to convince them to identify your old records in your new name. Different schools will handle

this request in different ways. Some might insist on an attachment of some kind to the old record. They will most certainly link the old and new records in their files, along with whatever documentation and justification you give them. Other schools may prepare new records entirely, without any mention or notation regarding the old name.

In your request you will naturally insist that any future inquiries regarding your records be answered only in your new name. The clerk or official who handles your application for change of name will probably need some educating on the matter, but your serious demeanor and convincing story should get full cooperation. Here's a story we know worked very well, because it's true.

A frightened wife of five years was separated from her abusive, vindictive husband, who also happened to be a prosecuting attorney in a large Southern city. She had an advanced degree in nursing, and was qualified to work in any hospital she chose. Several times she tried to relocate, but her husband made it very obvious he could always track her down, and with the most intimidating of "messages." It got to the point she could no longer keep a job yet needed to support herself. Her profession paid very well, but she needed to get away, completely, to work in a safe environment. She was advised to change her name legally (but without public notice) and secure a new SSN, which she was able to do. (See Chapter 6 on Social Security Numbers.) She was also told to take this information to the university where she studied and trained and request that they reissue her degree and credentials in her new name. The school was only too happy to oblige, and they did exactly as she asked. She removed herself from constant danger, and is now back working in her chosen profession.

Your school undoubtedly doesn't reissue degrees and documents in new names every day, but that is no reason they can't do so in your case, now. They will want a believable story, of course, but you will make the job easier for them if you can show that you are already functioning under the new name. It's the same old story—give them the paper they want, and you'll get the paper you want. If they can see your case in the light of helping a former student avoid a life of diminished expectations, but now make a turn for likely success, they will assist you—just ASK!

Finally, perhaps you never completed your college work, or left after discovering college "just wasn't for you." Some years later, however, you discover that a lot of doors are really, truly closed to those without at least a Bachelor's degree. The problem now, though, is that you can't take the time off to go back to regular classes and there's no way you could spend the next three to five years pursuing the degree you want. Again, relax. There is a great solution, and hundreds of legitimate colleges and universities are willing to help you.

Now you can earn a Bachelor's, Master's, MBA, Doctorate, even a law degree without ever taking a single traditional course, and in most cases without ever visiting a college campus. The book you will need is *Bear's Guide to Earning College Degrees Non-Traditionally*. People are earning degrees on the basis of equivalency exams, correspondence, or credit for work and life experience from over 650 schools and special programs. You can do the work at your own pace and at your personal convenience, and under any name you choose to use on your application. This large book (current edition, 336 pages) will have the answers you need to gain a college degree quickly and easily. Eden's *Privacy Catalog* also lists eight other college degree-related books, any of which could help you advance your career with a college degree—in your new name, if you wish.

## **Leave No Traces**

Probably the most private person in America for the past twenty years was Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. He had no car (no driver license or motor vehicle records), no job (no IRS or employment records), and no computer (no movements or interests on the Internet). He lived essentially as a hermit, with charitable support from only his family. He was so private, in fact, that the FBI was never able to find him.

None of us needs to live so “deep cover,” but there are many actions we can take daily that will secure much more privacy for our lifestyles and personal identity. The entire world does not need to know about everything you possess or enjoy doing, so why make them privy to it? Ultimately, the only way to protect your personal information is to leave no loose ends, no leads, and no traces that can come back to you.

The modern world works best when it is unthinkingly and remorselessly stripping away your privacy. Don’t let this happen! Throw sand into the gear box of telemarketing by using phones other than your own when calling numbers with 800 and 900 prefixes. This will nullify a company’s or list compiler’s efforts to retrieve your home or business telephone number for later callback, at dinnertime, of course.

## **Bank Accounts**

If you must have bank accounts, spread them around, and keep them modest in size. Don’t use mail drops to receive any banking statements, either. Instruct your bank(s) to hold all materials for your personal pickup. This will help prevent a “mail cover” from discovering your banking connections.

(PRIVACY Note: Minnesota has toughened its law on child support, requiring all banks to report quarterly the SSN, address, and “all account information” of any non-custodial parent owing child support. The practical effect of this is that the state’s banks are now simply supplying a list of all account holders with their identifying numbers. Where this information ends up and how it is ultimately used should be of concern to anyone having a bank account in the state of Minnesota.)

If you secure a new SSN, change to a new name, and completely alter your date of birth, you will be able to open a checking account, etc., that will be untraceable to your old identity. Observe the operating precautions above, however, to maintain a high level of privacy. You could also give the bank a completely fictitious address. Why? Again, you don’t want banking material arriving where you live or decide to receive other mail. If they DO send you something, it will come back to them marked “No Such Address, Return to Sender.” Should they ever question you at the bank (where you pick up your statements) why your mail was returned to them, you can inform them bluntly that they were asked not to mail anything to you in the first place. Your activities keep you on the move a lot, and you don’t like to have mail lying about for others to peruse, period. Kindly do as I have asked, OK?

Open your personal account with a blank money order, which you can purchase virtually anywhere with cash. Write in your new name, endorse it, and you have your opening deposit, which the bank will be only too happy to accept. The bank will require ID such as a driver’s license or state ID card, but this is something you would have already taken care of prior to opening any accounts. Be strictly business with the bank clerk, and avoid making yourself memorable through unusual appearance or excessive chatter, which bankers interpret

as “nervous”, which in turn means suspicious. The banking world functions best at the level of 10 mg. Valium, and anything more lively is not appreciated.

If you want to open a “commercial” or business checking account, the bank will require paperwork showing your connection to the name of the business. This means filing what is commonly called a “Fictitious Firm Name Statement”, or your “DBA” (Doing Business As). In most states the job takes about ten minutes. You don’t need an attorney, you don’t have to apply at the courthouse, and you don’t have to wait a month before it’s “official.” Every county in the U.S. has a newspaper that is designated as one of “general circulation,” and makes a tidy sideline profit from publishing “legals.” “Legals” are those ugly, small-print notices that run typically for four consecutive weeks, at the end of which your “public notice” is presumed to have been given.

All you have to do is go to the advertising office of this kind of newspaper, and tell them you want to “publish a DBA” (or whatever they might call it in your state). The clerk will give you a simple form to fill out, and charge you from \$30 to \$50 to cover both the four-week run of the notice and the filing fee for the notice at the county courthouse. The newspaper will do all this for you. You are actually done as soon as you pay them. You can immediately take your copy of the application to the bank, and they will accept this as proof of your fictitious business name. The newspaper will, of course, publish the notice in one issue per week for four consecutive weeks, and very likely mail you a set of the printed notices when completed, which you can save as “proof” of your DBA.

It’s beyond the scope of this book to discuss the variations of business organization, but the statement for your DBA will ask whether your business is 1) a sole proprietorship, 2) a partnership, 3) a corporation, or 4) some other form of business organization, please specify. If you plan to run the business yourself, and you have no partners involved, you are a proprietor. Just you. For privacy reasons this is probably what you had in mind anyway, so just check the box that says “Sole Proprietorship.” If you are going to use any of the other business organizations, you already know more than we need to include here, so be our guest!

Be advised that publishing your DBA will invite a flood of unsolicited mail from every possible source wanting to serve and sell to your new business. You will want to list your mail drop or other non-residential address as your address on the DBA application.

Back at the bank your commercial account will be opened in the name of your proprietorship, but you can choose what is actually printed on the check. Shall we explain? When you filed your DBA you made a statement that John Allan Williams (you), an individual, is doing business as “The John Williams Company,” “J. Williams & Associates,” “John Allan Co.,” “Happy Movers,” “The Bug People,” “Tacos de Tijuana,” or even “Felicia Valdez y Asociados.”

There are two points here:

(1) With almost no restrictions you can call your business anything you want. You can’t call yourself a corporation, however, and you wouldn’t want to appear to be some already-known company.

(2) Most DBA applications will allow you to list several business names and you should automatically do this, since it gives you the option of choosing which one you might want on your checks. One of the “fictitious business names” could simply be an ordinary personal name, too, just to throw off the curious. This, in turn could be the name you select to have

printed on your “business” checks. Convolved and confusing, true, but a few giant steps towards greater privacy and security. Your (new) ID might show “Jason Anderson,” but your (commercial) checking account will have the (seemingly personal) name of “Joaquin Armani.” And since “Joaquin Armani” seems a non-U.S. type name, the signature could be the kind of stylized splashes Europeans make purposely unreadable. The bank would know the signature as that of Jason Anderson, but recipients of the check might easily assume it reads Joaquin Armani.

Your primary purpose for opening and maintaining a checking account, whether personal or commercial, is probably to be able to deposit and/or cash checks you receive. If you are in fact running a small business you might also be getting lots of small checks, and a commercial checking account obviously makes sense. If you need to write a lot of checks, these accounts are also convenient.

But if you don’t need to write many checks, or seldom receive them (except for paychecks, perhaps), you could very well get along without a checking account. Pay by cash or money orders. (Today’s typical banking charges make some of the low-cost money orders actually cheaper than checks!) If you receive a check you need to cash, here are three possibilities:

- 1) Use a check-cashing service, even though their fees seem a bit high. They usually have a “no questions asked” policy, and they often provide very convincing photo ID cards to regular clients, too.

- 2) Endorse the check and use it as full or partial payment to a third party. “Shift the heat,” so to speak.

- 3) For large checks, send the endorsed check to the bank on which it is drawn with written instructions that they provide you with blank money orders, less fees, to be mailed Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested. If they balk at not filling in the payee, tell them that you do not yet know for what purpose you might use them.

Even though you maintain good privacy and security for your banking in alternate names, you should always be observant about the checks you receive and deposit. If someone were trying to penetrate your banking habits for some reason, he might send you a check, unsolicited, and wait for you to send it through for collection. Once he received the canceled check, he would be able to connect a few things to your new name(s), and possibly begin a closer surveillance. If you receive an unexpected check from some unknown source, and you think the above is a possibility, you could do at least three things besides put it through your account: 1) Send it to the issuing bank and ask for payment by money order; 2) Use a check cashing service you have never used before; or 3) Drop the check on the floor of a bus terminal and let human nature take its course. Someone else will know what to do with it...!

## **Shopping**

Avoid the “frequent shopper,” “membership,” or “club,” cards that track every item you buy. The small discounts you might receive in the process are more than offset by the target-marketing edge the promoters gain in collecting and cross-tabulating your data to attack you later from some unexpected angle. Just say NO. This process is analogous to what trash-pickers can learn about your habits. In this new version, however, they know all about you before you even leave the store.

Just to drive this point home, here is an account of what actually happened with one grocery chain's "Club Card." A regular customer one day slipped and took a hard fall on some wet flooring near the dairy case. He believed he had been injured because of their negligence, and hired a "personal-injury" attorney to sue for damages. Once the company learned of the lawsuit, however, they dug through their Club Card data to learn everything they could about this "member's" habits. They quickly discovered that he made a habit of buying liquor regularly, and that he had bought a fifth of vodka about three hours before his unfortunate "accident." When his attorney was informed of this, he quietly advised his client to settle for the actual doctor bills the store was willing to pay. Moral: Big Brother is now hiding in your wallet, too.

### **Residence**

Good form requires that you never tell others where you live, exactly. Why should you, unless you expect them to visit you? A vague reference to "in town," "out in the country," "about six miles from here," followed by a wistful "but I'm thinking of moving soon" will tell them a whole lot of nothing. You can always turn the table and ask them where do they live, right?

### **Cars**

Your car should never be registered in your own name, whatever it is. It is possible to have it registered to a company name, foundation, trust, or your rich "uncle" who simply wants you to use it while he's away on business. There are even private firms that will take care of all the paperwork so you don't have to waste your time in line at the DMV. They can advise on other possible wrinkles, too. You will most likely have to obtain whatever level of liability insurance your state of registration requires, but this is only prudent. Having your insurance papers "in order" answers a lot of questions in situations where you don't relish giving a lot of answers.

A very clever variation of this maneuver is what our good friend, "Boston T. Party" suggests in his marvelous book, *Bulletproof Privacy*. In a nutshell, arrange to have the car registered in a foreign country (preferably not Canada or Mexico), using an alias, of course. Be sure to have proper insurance papers, too. While this might seem like a big red flag, it would also deter a lot of cops from even asking, for fear of seeming a tad ignorant of foreign auto registration, etc. Just don't drive like an idiot, be polite if stopped, and have a very engaging story to explain "why the foreign tags?" Couldn't you be "on sabbatical" from the American University at Garmischpartenkirchen, in the Bavarian Alps? Cars are very expensive in Europe, officer, and it's all I can afford just to ship this one back and forth. He may envy your presumed international lifestyle, but will go away smug that he drives a better car than you do.

If you are disappearing from an old ID into a new one, you will not be taking your old car with you, certainly not if it was registered in your old name. Plan to sell it for cash to one of the many commercial cash buyers who will never remember who you are, uh, were. They can take it off your hands in minutes, and you will walk away with cash money. It would be best if you can purchase your next car for cash, and you will probably gain a considerable price concession if you do. Have the private party make out a bill of sale in the name you are going to use for registration, per above.

## **Safe Storage**

At some point you may wish to secure a “hideout” for your sensitive documents, extra set of credit cards, spare cash, “spare” identity papers, or other very private items. This should not be at your home or office, of course, but some place completely removed, and one that you would not normally need to “visit” very often. Possibilities: a self-storage unit; a private vault (not at a bank); a private garage (many people would be happy to store your “antique trunk” for \$100 a year, no questions asked); or a properly constructed underground vault in a place you could always access without undue attention. The book *How to Bury Your Goods* offers many ways to do this job right. See “Resources” for listing.

## **Telephone**

Mark Twain called the telephone “the Devil’s trumpet.” His sentiment still rings true in California where well over half of all residential telephone numbers are unlisted. Folks there just don’t want to hear the phone ring. But before you think an unlisted number is any assurance of privacy, be aware that the giant General Telephone (now Verizon) recently published and distributed a directory to telemarketers that contained at least 50,000 unlisted California residential phone numbers. The directories were recalled, but not without lots of negative publicity and outspoken criticism from police officers, crime victims, psychiatrists, and the general public, all of whom have good reasons for keeping their telephone numbers “private.”

This may seem almost academic to our readers who will likely not want to have any telephone number tied to their identity. And, indeed, why should they? There are so many options these days for using the telephone without giving away your identity, it shouldn’t even appear to be much of a problem. For starters:

1. Use a phone listed under someone else’s name, in case you are renting a room, etc.
2. Use a nearby pay phone. Change and rotate the phones you use.
3. Use calling cards for prepaid calls. Change cards when used up. Never have them “recharged.” Good ole Tim McVeigh was tracked because he didn’t change cards.
4. Pay a cooperating person to add your own voice mailbox to his number, so you can receive messages.
5. Hire an answering service, which, by the way, can also provide some other handy services. Just ask them.

Bottom line: Don’t think for a six-second increment that you can’t make arrangements for telephone service that will fit your needs for security and privacy. There are other possibilities related to computer services, which we will watch develop further before commenting on them. Be aware that the telecommunications world is changing very fast these days, and that very likely some totally new ways to “make a phone call” will become available, ways that will enable you to keep your identity separate from your phone records.

## **Name and Address**

NEVER give your name and address to some casual solicitor for a “contest,” “sweepstakes,” or any other promotion. You’re just setting yourself up for intrusions and unwanted inquiry down the road. And you never know who will be doing the asking! If you do “sign up” for some activity, like a charity walk, use a fictitious name you will easily

recognize later. In the world of amateur running, there is a group known as the Hash House Harriers who ALWAYS use fanciful “running names” at their gatherings and events. They see themselves as “drinkers with a running problem,” but their only “real identity” is running. It works for them!

### **On the Job**

Most people in the U.S. have a “job.” They work for someone they have to call “the Boss.” Even though they may not like the boss, or the company he represents, they have (in the Biblical sense) “sold their souls for wages,” and will have to do as they are told while on the job. For many employees their job is their identity, so much so, that when they leave, get fired, or retire, they “don’t know what to do with themselves.” It’s as if they did lose their identities. How strange!

But then, working is such a central part of our lives, that our trades and occupations do very much “identify” us to others. Not to have a job makes one almost suspect to others. People who do not arouse such suspicion, of course, are students, housewives, retirees, the very rich, the poor and the self-employed. Everyone else is expected to work or at least have the appearance of working. Even in the criminal world, hoods and operators often make efforts to appear being “gainfully employed.”

So you want to get a job, but now with a new identity? Unless the job requires a security background check, it should not be too difficult. Use the address of your MFS as your residence, and your voice mail number as your telephone. No one will know the difference. Personal references are almost never checked out. Gaps in your employment history should be “covered” by extra schooling or a cooperative friend or relative who was your “employer.” Do not provide your SSN until and unless you are hired. Be firm about this, explaining that you will provide it upon being hired. Tell them that you do not want your SSN to be known by anyone other than those with a legitimate need for it. (See Chapter 6 on Social Security Numbers for more information which might prove useful in this area.)

The federal government has recently expanded “new hire” reporting requirements nationwide with implementation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. States now have the New Employee Registry program that requires employers to report all newly hired employees within twenty calendar days of starting work. This centralized “confidential” system will be used by state and federal agencies to locate parents who are delinquent in their child support payments, as well as aid in reducing overpayments of unemployment insurance, welfare, Medicaid and food stamps.

In the U.S. employers generally set their own standards for how far they can pry into their workers’ lives. Court rulings have given companies fairly broad authority to monitor such things as phone conversations and E-mail, to run pre-employment psychological tests, and to check on drug use, both illegal and prescription. The theory is that the employees are answerable to their employer, and that the employer is in turn responsible for their actions while on the job. If you have to work for “the man,” expect no privacy and you will not be disappointed.

All of which is not to say that your life is an open book to your employer and co-workers. Don’t forget that most of what they will ever know about you is what you choose to share with them in the first place. Simply watch what you say at all times. If you ever wonder about what effect your speech or comments might have on others, stop and imagine how your

remarks might sound if they were being repeated in court before a jury. What would they “reasonably” think? We Americans love to brag and compare, but it can’t always hurt just to keep your mouth shut. Talk about something that takes attention away from you. Let the other person do the talking. Nod affirmatively throughout the “conversation,” and he will think you are the most interesting person he’s ever met.

The American workplace is using more and more technology to identify employees. Bar-code scanners reading strips of numerical information on badges, fingerprint identification, voice-recognition, even DNA testing and profiling allow employers to control their employees. The boss wants to be sure you are where you’re supposed to be, that you’re not away too long, and that you’re busy all the time in between. They are also becoming interested in knowing about your allergies, possible predisposition to catastrophic illnesses like cancer, and even a propensity towards violence. A lock of hair, fingernail clippings, and other DNA samplings from your body will become a kind of “ID” employers will depend on to maintain profitable, safe workplaces. Or so they say...

Big Brother is truly “in your face” in the workplace. Companies can do things routinely to their employees that would be illegal in other settings. Drug testing? Legal anytime they want to check. On-the-job surveillance? Just as legal. E-mail monitoring? Compulsory searches? Restrictions on dating employees of competing firms? The employer calls the shots. Privacy is not an issue in the workplace, since it doesn’t (legally) exist. The only recourse put-upon employees have found useful is making claims under the heading of “harassment,” which is another topic all together.

Want to be “invisible” to the boss? Don’t abuse the company phone with too many personal calls. Take anything personal home at night, especially any journals, date books or lists of grievances. (If the boss finds these, they can be confiscated.) Consider the computer strictly a company tool, and never use it for personal files or communications. Whatever an employer finds in his computers is fair game. Know in advance how privacy-sensitive the employer is; see if he has had run-ins over privacy issues. If you file a workers’ compensation claim, you can count on being investigated, which can include any confidential counseling sessions you might have attended as an employee.

## **Your Residence**

We all have to live somewhere. If we spend at least a third of our day on the job, we probably spend over half at our residence, our “home.” It becomes almost automatic that we are “identified” by where we live, whether we like it or not. We will most certainly have neighbors, who will eventually get to “know” us. (Even the Unabomber had neighbors; they just didn’t get to know him very well.)

Establishing a new home while using a new identity, however, presents many challenges. This general topic could probably be an entire chapter, but we need to illustrate a number of possibilities and considerations. Everyone, of course, has his own preference for style of living, relative need for privacy, and ability to make changes when necessary. The ideas we offer here are by no means meant to be applicable to everybody, nor are they meant to be a complete list of options. Just consider them “possibilities” that might prove useful, now or later.

If you’re really at “rock-bottom” the most private and least expensive way to establish a new residence is to rent a room in a private home, preferably from a homeowner, not a lessee.

Typically, you will be in a somewhat quiet neighborhood, the utilities will already be covered in your rent, and you could probably order voice mail on the landlord's existing telephone number. You will also have "all the comforts of home" with access to kitchen and living areas, even your own bathroom. The primary concern of the landlord will be that you pay your rent on time, in full, and that you're not obnoxious. The local newspaper will carry classified ads under "Rooms for rent," "Rentals to share," etc. The biggest disadvantage to this arrangement is that of personal contact with the other resident(s). But a lot of that depends on you.

Larger urban areas with extensive suburbs are perhaps best from the privacy standpoint. They may not be the least expensive, but you will have a much broader selection of neighborhoods and room availabilities. Rural areas offer much lower-cost room rentals, but, ironically, far less privacy. The locals will soon enough "get to know ya." Ask anyone who's ever lived in the country or a small town.

Any town with a college or university will offer many opportunities to rent a room or share an apartment. Landlords are used to students "coming and going," and won't look at you twice if you have the cash needed to cover their move-in charges. Students these days come in all ages, too; if anyone should even ask why an "older" person is now going to college, just indicate you're finally going after that BA or advance degree you always wanted to get. An irregular schedule won't arouse suspicion either.

If you are going to rent property under a new identity, you will have better luck renting directly from the owner. If you are applying for an apartment or part of a four-plex, for example, there's a great likelihood the manager will go for a credit check through a local tenant-screening company. While there won't be anything negative in your report, neither will there be anything in depth, which could appear equally "negative." It would be sure to invite questions. An individual landlord will be pleased with a pleasant tenant paying first and last, plus any necessary deposits, in cash.

Another possibility for renting is to have a cooperative friend or relative rent in his name, particularly if you want to rent where tenant screening is likely to occur. Since these rental situations will be less "personal," it will also be easier to maintain that you are only house-sitting or holding down the fort until your friend returns from his job assignment in Saudi Arabia. Your obligation will be to make sure the rent is always paid on time, and that the wrong kinds of questions never have to be asked. If your friend is able to rent the place for you, there should be no problem arranging utilities, either. Again, just don't jeopardize your situation by not paying the bills. A friend you stiff will no longer be your friend.

If you already own a place to live, you might want to consider transferring ownership to a trust, from which you could lease or rent under any name you wish. You would want to consult good legal help to arrange the proper trust, but it would be well worth it. The trust could be domiciled in one of the more privacy-oriented states like Nevada or Delaware, or at least under terms that would keep your name hidden. Real estate records are the first watering holes of snoops and troublemakers looking to sue on the slightest pretext. Get your name off these public records and start living behind a trust, the terms of which are private records. Wealthy individuals and celebrities have long utilized trusts and other property-owning arrangements to isolate themselves from Trash TV types and their near relations, the contingency-fee lawyers.

If you want to buy a home or other property on which to live, you would be well advised to work through a competent attorney who will not only be able to maintain your

anonymity throughout the negotiations, but also establish the form of ownership (likely a trust) that will secure your long term security and privacy. This is one of the ways potential targets of lawsuits make themselves “judgment proof.” When the day arrives for you to move to your new digs, you will simply be the caretaker, “poor second cousin,” or other lowly type merely staying there until the new owner concludes his just-extended, two-year teaching commitment at the University of Leipzig. (If it ever became necessary to explain why he never comes around, it’s only because he’s being considered for full professorship, and needs to be available for review at any time.)

A final consideration regarding residence is how to handle “moving day.” Ideally you should not use movers at all, but do as much of it as possible by yourself. Why? “Loose ends,” remember? Avoid any connection between your last place and your new one, and this would include individuals who could make that connection. Moving companies keep records, and would have little incentive past a twenty-dollar bill to tell any-and-all where “so-and-so” went, from-and-to. Rent a truck, use casual labor, sell off the big stuff, but keep the moving project under your personal control. If you really want to be slick, move in unnoticeable stages so the old neighbors have no idea you’ve even left. Explain any “obvious” signs by saying you are getting newer models of the items you are presently donating to The Salvation Army, or some other large, impersonal charity.

### **Your New Lifestyle**

If you have gone through all the trouble to change your identity, have made a successful move, and now want to “start life over,” you probably had a very good reason to do so. With the best of motives, however, the new direction in your life will not be a good turn unless you avoid the situations and problems that led you to the decision in the first place. Here’s why.

If you found yourself always seeming to attract the wrong kind of people and they perhaps found it easy to involve you in various less-than-honorable schemes, and now you want to leave such vexations behind, it will take more than a change of identity for you to succeed. Let’s say this more directly: people who lead criminal lifestyles will continue to face the hazards of getting busted regardless of their ID. New ID won’t save them, period. Of course some operators will find that changing ID is a quick way to even faster crime, but it will be their criminal behavior that busts them, not their ID.

The other side of the coin is a chance for a new life. Your reason is probably that you want to live quietly and privately, without the problems you had before. Your use of a new identity will enable you to get certain people off your back and out of your life for good. You will be able to avoid situations that threatened your property, your safety, and even your freedom. Once you resolve to use your new identity for improving your life many problems will disappear, but only if you make some changes in your lifestyle that will lessen their chances of recurring. Let’s be specific.

The hallmark of your new lifestyle is adopting what we call “low profile.” This means not getting yourself noticed by people who could be bad news in your new life. Don’t call attention to yourself by wearing flashy clothes, obvious (good) jewelry, and a haughty attitude. Live in a truly ordinary, undistinguished neighborhood. Your car should be no more than average for your surroundings, at least a few years old, but “clean” (dented rust-buckets are noticed). Do your socializing away from your residence. You don’t need to expose your new life to the curious, who certainly will have questions. Adopt a new hobby or pastime that will

in turn expose you to a new social element. Avoid any and all confrontations with neighbors; be friendly, but not necessarily sociable. If you enjoy unusual, exotic entertainment, either watch it on video or travel to it. If you've always been a local barfly type, make a turn for better health and join a biking or running club (these folks drink, too, but in a very different environment!).

Are you getting the picture? Analyze your personal traits, interests, and habits for characteristics that would easily identify you in the minds of others. Try to eliminate those that have tended to bring you grief in the past. Focus on those that will contribute to making your new identity truly more enjoyable. This is your chance to create a "new you," so make it a worthy effort. The ideas we mention here are meant to stimulate your thinking. Look at yourself in terms of both the "old you" and the "new you" and you will definitely come up with other ways to change and improve your personal lifestyle. These changes will in turn give real life to your new identity. And who can say, maybe these are the very changes you always wanted to make, and now you can.

### **Parting Thoughts on Living With New ID**

It's 2AM and you've decided to take a walk down Main Street because you're having trouble getting to sleep. Not too many people are out this time of night, and you're enjoying the quiet walk along the different storefronts. Suddenly a police car pulls up and two police officers jump out and approach you. "Hey buddy, what are you doing around here this time of night?"

You want to be cooperative but you're irritated that your quiet walk has been interrupted. "I'm just out taking a walk," you reply. The policeman continues the questions, asking for your name and address. You are now feeling uneasy and ask, "Why do you want this information?"

"Because I want to know who you are and where you live," the officer replies, "and if you don't identify yourself we'll have to take a little trip downtown until we find out who you are and what you're doing around here this time of night! There have been some burglaries and drug traffic along here, and you look a little suspicious to me."

What would you do at this point? May the police officer arrest you and put you in jail because you refuse to say anything? Is it a crime not to answer questions? Does the state have the authority to enact a law which requires citizens to provide identification upon request by a police officer? The U.S Supreme Court has spoken on these issues in the following cases:

In Brown v Texas, 443 US 47: "The application of Texas Penal Code to detain appellant and require him to identify himself violated the Fourth Amendment because the officers lacked any reasonable suspicion to believe appellant was engaged or had engaged in criminal conduct. Accordingly, appellant may not be punished for refusing to identify himself, and the conviction is reversed."

In Kolender v Lawson, 461 US 944, (1983): "Merely to facilitate the general law enforcement objectives of investigating and preventing unspecified crimes, states may not authorize the arrest and criminal prosecution of an individual for failing to produce identification or further information on demand of a police officer."

“In sum, under the Fourth Amendment, police officers with reasonable suspicion that an individual has committed or is about to commit a crime may detain that individual, using some force if necessary, for the purpose of asking investigative questions.

“They may ask their questions in a way calculated to obtain an answer, but they may not compel an answer, and they must allow the person to leave after a reasonably brief period of time unless the information they have acquired during the encounter has given them probable cause sufficient to justify an arrest.” (Emphasis ours.)

Other cases such as Terry v Ohio, 392 US 188, and Dunaway v New York, 442 US 200 give additional information concerning the protections provided citizens as well as the restrictions upon law enforcement under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

### **REMEMBER:**

There is no requirement anywhere in the U.S. to carry identification on one’s person. And the U.S. Supreme Court has expressly said that for a government official to demand ID from a law-abiding citizen is unconstitutional. Kolender v. Lawson, above.

The State of Michigan passed a law requiring photo identification in order to vote. The State Attorney General ruled that it was unconstitutional and “violates the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The right to vote is our most precious right. For the poor, those who do not drive—especially the elderly, the handicapped and those who, for whatever reasons, do not possess a picture identification card—this requirement imposes economic and logistical burdens.” He based his opinion on Supreme Court cases invalidating unnecessary burdens on the right to vote.

Finally, do these rules apply when you want to board a commercial airliner? Probably not. The Federal Aviation Administration says that it issued a directive in 1995 requiring airlines to ask for government-issued photo ID from all passengers but also to provide alternative security measures if a person declines to present ID. But the directive itself remains secret. Most airlines say (incorrectly) that the FAA requires them to make a photo ID a condition of boarding a plane. Some airlines will admit that the requirement results from their own policies. And other airlines will provide alternatives for passengers who decline to present ID or do not have it.

The solution? Call the airline in advance for their rule(s) on ID for boarding. If you have to go “up the ladder” to get a satisfactory answer, make a note of the conversation, the time, and name of the official whose response you will then be able to quote to a perhaps disbelieving ticket clerk. You may want to inform the official you are aware of the FAA directive, and that for personal security reasons you never carry ID on board an airplane. (You were once on a hijacked flight in the Middle East, during which ID was demanded...) A polite but firm attitude will likely gain the cooperation you seek.

Of course you may also want to “hide a pebble among pebbles” by using a good quality photo ID based on your Level One ID. In other words, since the airlines are expecting a photo ID, give it to them. Just don’t use your Level Two ID. The clerks are presented all kinds of photo ID—literally from around the world—and if yours “looks” like a government-issued ID they won’t look further. Really, this “ID requirement” is about as useful as the thumbprint you leave at the bank. The reason they want the photo ID? They’re looking for terrorists, of course, who, we are to presume, would not want to present ID before blowing up a plane. They must have some truly great minds at the FAA.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Low Profile Techniques**

The safest and most effective way to disappear and start a new life is to adopt mental attitudes as well as lifestyle behaviors we call “Low Profile.” You’ve undoubtedly heard this term applied to situations when a person needs to hide out for a while and tries not to generate unwanted attention from others. As it applies to disappearing and the themes in this book, however, “low profile” has hundreds of practical applications that can affect just about every aspect of daily life.

The best way to demonstrate low profile techniques is to present you with suggestions and scenarios depicting low profile in practice. This chapter provides you with many practical examples of low profile that you can follow and use in your own life. Nothing here is written in stone, of course, so pick and choose those ideas that appeal most to you as well as those you know you should adopt. Some of these ideas have already been mentioned in earlier chapters, but it doesn’t hurt to review them from the wider perspective of actually “living” a new life.

Bottom line: Low Profile techniques are successful only if they are practiced with low profile attitude. You must practice low profile consciously and continuously to make it work. This means you must BE AWARE of what you are doing—as you’re doing it—and you must do it all the time. The reward will be a safer, more private life that you will be able to control and enjoy the way you want it. In no particular order, then, we present these practical ideas for low profile living.

If you need to dump your car, sell it yourself to a private party for cash. Be very careful not to reveal anything to this person about your real plans or reasons for selling. He would be an ideal source of information of this nature for snoopers, thanks to the efficiency of auto registration systems throughout the country. The buyer will, of course, be an excellent place to dump any fake, purposely misleading information you care to leave behind.

Once you relocate, should you need another car, pay cash for it even if it represents lowering your “status.” Delay registering the new car as long as possible. By the time you do, hopefully you will have established a new identity completely unknown to the last owner of the car.

Changing completely the “profile” of the type of car you drive might help reinforce your new identity, too. If you last had a large, domestic, expensive car, try for a small, foreign, economy car. Avoid splashy colors and styling, however. Look dull. Red cars get more attention from highway patrols—a proven fact.

If you need to move large amounts of personal property and can't handle the job yourself, hire some "no-name" movers from a city or two away, and have them put your stuff in some kind of public storage where you control access. Days, weeks, or months later, have another mover transfer your goodies to your new address. Plan this latter move for a time when you feel there might be the least chance of surveillance of the storage premises. DO IT QUICK. Avoid any intervening visits to check up on your stored items. Remember, too, to give false and misleading information to the agents who rent the storage space to you.

Sever all ties with any unions, clubs, lodges, or other organizations to which you belong. Become a “lost” member. It's best to leave these groups “cold,” that is, don't go around cashing in your interests in special funds or private accounts to the point where it becomes obvious you're intending to pull up stakes. Leave a few bucks on the books.

Never send in Change-of-Address forms to publishers of magazines or other periodicals, and certainly don't leave such a form at the local Post Office. Your mail will be returned to senders stamped, “Moved, left no forwarding address,” or “Unable to forward,” or words to this effect.

Never become friendly with a landlord. Hold up your end of the rental agreement, and he will undoubtedly be pleased to leave you completely alone. Landlords are fertile sources of information for snoops, so consider every conversation with them the same as if you were talking with the FBI. In his case, however, you are perfectly free to lie, mislead, and deceive all day long with impunity, so DO IT. Remember, however, that if you burn him for the rent when you split, you will gain not only an unpaid creditor but also an enemy who will bend over twice to help skip tracers.

Life insurance should be cancelled or allowed to lapse. If there is any cash value, take the money before you split. Insurance companies are great gatherers of personal information, so be sure not to tip off agents regarding your plans. Give them believable excuses like deciding to go with another carrier or your employer's group plan, etc.

When you change houses or apartments, be careful not to leave behind items that might serve as indicators of your past, your interests, hobbies, or lifestyle. Books and clothing items you no longer need should be donated anonymously to the Goodwill, Salvation Army, etc

If you have grown children make it clear to them they will never know where you really are. Correspond through mail drops and make phone calls from pay booths if you must communicate. Cutting family ties can be painful, but sometimes the alternatives hurt more. Ideally, parents should train their children never to give personal information to third parties. Agents and investigators should be told to “get a warrant.”

Don't worry about being tracked down by your photo. Tracing by photo isn't done unless you're a fairly notorious person, usually with a reward on your head. You've got to be "worth" the great effort and expense. It is possible to trace a person this way, but modern cops and dicks don't do it unless there is no other way and the search is justified. The FBI admits that at any one time there are at least 75,000 fugitives in the U.S., so the Post Office photos can't really be working all that well, wouldn't you agree?

It can be very low profile to room in someone else's apartment or home. Check the daily newspapers for ads under headings like "Rooms to share," "Rentals to share," or "Apartments to share." This way all records relating to occupancy will already be in someone else's name. You will make arrangements with the current occupant only, not the landlord and the various utilities. This arrangement is well suited to someone wanting to put lots of "distance" between one identity and another, and is a great way to "get lost," even if only a few blocks away. Once a new identity has been set up—a process that can take several weeks or months for someone wanting foolproof identity—he is much freer to appear, fully reborn, wherever he pleases.

Avoid getting involved in lawsuits or failing to respond to citations. If you have to split in a hurry, and can't make an appearance, you've just bought yourself a possible bench warrant that will be happily enforced the next time a traffic officer pulls you over for a "broken tail light." It is well-known fact that arrests of most cons and fugitives are made in "circumstances unrelated to their crimes." Stops for traffic violations are number-one such "circumstances."

Pets can be a drag if you need to move in a hurry, so consider your situation carefully if you simply must have one. Also, most urban areas require the registering of certain kinds of animals, especially dogs. You can avoid registering them as long as possible, and give totally false information when a canvassing inspector catches up to you.

If you own or are buying a home, but want to disappear, arrange to have an attorney handle the sale and escrow. Attorneys can generally be counted on to follow their client's instructions, and are usually quite careful about divulging information to third parties (snoops). Short of a court order, data relating to their clients is considered private and privileged. You will want to instruct your attorney in the manner of forwarding funds to you. He will have several ideas along this line, such as a trust account, conversion to cash, or deposits made out of state or the country.

There should be no problem in his handling the details of the sale once you grant him power of attorney for this purpose. Don't be afraid to pay him well for his services, as he will remain a known "link" between your old and new lives. Should other methods of tracing fail, investigators will put pressure on him. Since most attorneys enjoy a good battle of wits, protect yourself by keeping him on your side. Wealthy people have always used smart attorneys to cover their moves, and so can you.

Similarly, if you have recently been the beneficiary of a will or have an interest in an estate, notify the executor that further transactions are to be directed through your attorney. Your address can thus be kept from public records. Since many probate matters can drag on for years, your present address will have to be known to the executor. It shouldn't bother him that you wish a little privacy. If the estate in question is of great value to you, you would naturally want an attorney to look out for your interests, so this is the perfect excuse. Attorneys should be used.

If minor children are involved in your disappearing act, things can get complicated if they can't or won't cooperate with you. You will probably be changing identity, so you will have to get them to accept at least a new surname. Be serious about it and they should get the message. They will have to cut off contact with old neighborhood friends, and will have to enroll in new schools under their new names. Since most schools require records and transcripts to be sent from the last school of attendance, and enrollment of kindergarteners and first graders to be accompanied by birth certificates, a little ingenuity and cleverness is in order.

First, birth certificates can easily be faked, as there are many sources of blank forms. Check the classified ads in any of the national tabloids ("Globe," "The National Enquirer," etc.) under such headings as "Certificates" and "Miscellaneous." The ID cards offered by these mail order firms are often accompanied by free birth certificates, too. For more information on birth certificates and alternate identity, order a copy of *I.D. By Mail* or *The Paper Trip II*.

In this latter book, you will also get ideas into how to create "records" of past activities, methods that will work in helping you cover your children's tracks as well. The basic technique is to recreate the records you want, provide the address of a mail forwarding service as that of the source of those records, and handle all correspondence yourself. By using photo duplication of altered documents, a little rubber-stamping, or even some "quick-print" offset printing, you can easily and rather quickly come up with working solutions to some of the most baffling problems in starting a new identity. You can have a field day creating all kinds of "backgrounds." The only limitation is your own imagination. These methods work, too!!

It would usually be a good idea not to give children an advance warning they are about to split the neighborhood, as they will be quick to tell their friends and schoolmates. Once on the move, keep them from communicating until you can arrange for them not to give away your location. Mail forwarding services can help here, too. Have them begin using their new last names right away.

If you belong to an Automobile Association, let your membership lapse. If you decide to rejoin, do it several months later under a new name, or join some other Auto Club under the new name.

If you use a particular barber or beauty shop, give no indication you are about to move or make any kind of radical change in your life. Talk about the weather, politics, or sports, but keep your private thoughts from becoming popular knowledge. Gossip thrives in these places.

The same goes for bars, pool halls, liquor stores, and restaurants that you have frequented in the past. Don't tip them off.

If you're planning to remain in the same general area, don't use your old library card anymore. Chuck it and apply for another at another branch, under another name, of course.

When dealing with any real estate people to set up your new location, use only your new name. Many real estate firms also handle rentals, and are thus good sources for tracers if they have a general idea where you are, or are headed. This underlines the need to begin creating a new identity before you ever decide to "move."

When you notify the utilities and telephone companies to discontinue service, tell them not to send any refunds (if any are due) or closing bills until you notify them, as you are relocating and are not yet sure of the address. This way you will not be leaving any leads in this fertile field for investigators.

If you plan to remain in the general area serviced by the same utility company or companies, it would be advisable to have service begun either several weeks before you move (under the new name), or several weeks after you move. Snoops would find "connect" requests within five to ten days of your move well worth investigating.

If you ship personal property via UPS or common carrier, don't give them the address where you intend to locate, not even the city. Simply tell them to ship to one of their pick-up points reasonably nearby your new location. Tell them you won't have a definite address for several weeks, and that you will pick up the stuff "Will Call." To put a good kink in a pursuer's trail, collect your items at this latter destination and ship again, via another carrier, to a location nearer your actual destination. Use the "Will Call" method again, though. A cardinal operating procedure is never to establish a link between the new and the old. Use blind addresses, aliases and other covers to screen the actual transactions. Time delays work in your favor also, the longer the better.

If you decide to hawk your possessions before disappearing, be extremely careful not to give away your real reasons for doing so (you could be going into missionary work in Uruguay), and definitely not the destination you have in mind. You could even pretend you are an employee of the person moving, and that the "boss" is moving his business to another state.

A gambit used by many fly-by-night employers, such as carnival operators, is to claim that they can never make decisions (write checks) without their "brother's" approval and signature. Gee, they'd love to pay you, but their "brother" is tied up out of town until a week from next Tuesday.... Meanwhile, the operator splits.

If you decide to use a pawnshop for certain items, again, be discreet and careful not to divulge helpful information regarding your move. Pawnshops are natural haunts for snoops. Unless you're used to dealing with them, it might be safest to sell your items openly. Pawnshop

operators are very astute observers of people, and you could easily tip them off without intending to. They can sense desperation before you even come through the door.

Although procedures vary from state to state, it is generally possible one way or another to trace a person through his vehicle registration. If you plan to take your car with you, as a first measure simply don't notify the Motor Vehicle people of your change of address. Sometime before you must pay registration fees again, either sell the car outright, or, arrange a dummy sale to yourself under your new name—a transaction that can often be done by mail.

There is a national clearinghouse for vehicle registrations, which means a particular vehicle, if properly registered, can be traced through its various sequential owners. It would be a shame that one's love for his car were greater than for his personal freedom, but many people will want to “take it with them.” A two-stage dummy sale would be much safer, especially if one of the transactions took place in another state. Registering the car in the name of a business could be another ploy to consider. The registration of other personal property, such as boats, trailers, and airplanes should be considered in the same light as that for automobiles.

Allusions to “going back East,” or “returning to college,” can be helpful smoke screens in evading inquisitive landlords. Never let them know where you're really going.

J. Edgar Hoover stated many times that fully 90% of all arrests by the FBI are due directly to the “helpful cooperation” of neighbors and relatives. Need we say more?

Should you have school-age children and not want them to attend public schools, you can:

- Find a suitable private school.
- Tell neighbors the children are feeble-minded and that you are tutoring them at home.
- Tell the inquisitive you are a transient visitor from Mississippi, Virginia, or South Carolina, states that have repealed compulsory attendance laws.
- Move every three months or so to prevent rumors from spreading too far.
- Keep the children under cover during school hours.

Don't take the bus cross-country. Terminals are notorious hangouts for snoop informers who appraise bus travelers as “only niggers, spics, college beatniks, and other commie types.” (You'd never believe who said this, but then again, you may very well know.)

Keep your home, job, personal activities and hobbies well separated, even self-contained. Don't let heat in one area endanger any of the others. How? Read on.

Keep the address of where you actually live a well-guarded secret. This is VERY IMPORTANT. Never carry your actual address on you or in your car. Let only those who are trustworthy and have a genuine need know your actual address.

Set up a “legal” address somewhere else, such as a closet at a friend's house, containing some misleading personal effects (books on subjects you have no interest in, and clothes a few

sizes away from your own). He can thus point to something if ever questioned; but, of course, he hasn't the slightest notion when you'll be returning from India.

Use this "legal" address for all your ID that you plan on using regularly, such as drivers license or state ID. Provide it also for your employer's records, should it be required.

If you need a telephone, not only have it unlisted, but also have the records in a phony name. Let only the address be correct among the facts you are asked to provide. A small cash deposit is a small price to pay for anonymity.

Rent your apartment, house, etc., under yet another phony name, if you wish. Always pay utility bills and rent with money orders or cash. Cash doesn't have your name on it, and you never have to provide your correct name on a money order. Keep a few receipts with your current alias written on them in case you still haven't obtained good ID. Virtually any recognizable paper document "with your name on it" can be good enough for you to "identify" yourself if stopped for questioning. When you are between identities, this is the most convenient way of proving you are at least more "substantial" than an escaped convict.

Receive all your mail at a 24-hour Post Office box. Use your "legal" address to obtain the box, or any "friendly" address for that matter. Once you have the box, and continue to pay the rent for it, you can move every day of the week, and the Post Office will never care.

Instead of a P.O. box you can employ a mail forwarding service. They will generally cooperate fully with you in your efforts to keep a good distance between you and anyone else, whatever your reasons. Most newspapers carry their ads in the classified section under "Personals." With two or more services you can route your mail in and out of the country, or from one coast to the other and back again, each mailing under a different "code" name. Houdini never had it so easy.

For people (and bill collectors) you want to "lose," provide a forwarding address out of the country. You can arrange to have letters mailed from foreign countries stating you have no intention of ever returning. If they are to creditors, tell them to write you off and save the collection expenses.

Another ruse for covering tracks is to write "deceased" on the face of incoming mail. Drop unopened into public mailboxes. All but professional snoops will get the hint.

By far the most useful method of learning about a person "cold" is through his driver's license, a copy of which any investigator has no difficulty in obtaining. A postage stamp and the right request get him the information in a few days. The best way to make sure snoopers draw a blank is to change your identity via one of the workable methods detailed in *The Paper Trip II or III*.

Thanks to computers and credit cards, virtually everyone has lost his privacy, but the right maneuvers in the personal identity field can liberate an individual rather quickly from

such information tyranny. Indeed, resorting to methods of "disappearing" are really the only feasible ways of evading what amounts to electronic control of your life. When you exercise the option of unplugging yourself from the computerized data exchanges, you can in fact "start all over" or at least regain and maximize your personal privacy. We think it's well worth it.

It can be good discipline to do without a savings or checking account. If you must have one, set it up under a good alias for which you will need supportive ID. A driver's license or state ID card under a phony name can be obtained using any of the methods shown in *The Paper Trip II*, and the Social Security "number" you give can be totally fake, even made up right on the spot. Just remember as you recite your "number" that it has nine digits, however. For IRS purposes, the SSN used for your checking account is of no value, and on your savings account serves only as a cross-check for the reporting of interest. This latter purpose, it has been revealed, is of little consequence in that the IRS virtually never bothers to verify interest reporting statements sent in by the banks. They have relied on the "basic honesty" of taxpayers.

A solid set of ID in another name is what can truly be called "freedom insurance." With the growing threat of arrest and prosecution for leading a "free" life, it's plainly comforting to have the option to cut and run, even if you choose not to.

Obtaining alternate ID should be done before you get into trouble. Take the time to do it right. In an emergency many other matters will compete for your time. In the future first-class ID may become more difficult to obtain, too.

The best ID to obtain is obviously that which is issued directly by government agencies themselves. Using forged, stolen or counterfeited ID is a bust in itself. Privately issued ID is more lightweight, but in lieu of government issued ID, can serve the same purpose, namely, protection from harassment. It won't get you a passport, though.

With "legal" ID you will find no trouble in doing many tasks that would otherwise prove impossible or extremely difficult at best. Also with "legal" ID the risk of detection is reduced to a minimum. When and if you choose to disappear, you can appear instantly "identifiable."

With government issued ID you can effectively erase the curse of a jail or prison record. Tens of thousands of "free" Americans carry with them the permanent label of "felon" or "ex-con." The real crime begins only after a person leaves the joint; legal and social ostracism continues all their life. What better reason to disappear?

If you had the misfortune to receive a less-than-honorable discharge from the armed forces (thousands do so annually), the acquisition and use of an alternate identity will be your first step in beginning to live free. Even though you may have lost all or most of your G.I. "benefits," you'll at least be able to get a decent job—now. Watch out for fingerprinting, however. Big Brother has your prints, and will be only too happy to prove you're one of those "Dirty, rotten, rat-fink, Commie deserters." And you thought honest criminals had it bad?

Using an alternate identity is another way of covering up a bad employment record, too, particularly if the law was involved in some adverse way, such as in cases of theft, embezzlement, etc. In some occupational circles the word gets around efficiently—and fast.

Many young men of draft age split to Canada during the Vietnam fiasco to escape what they considered the illegal obligation of fighting an immoral war. Their return was often facilitated by the acquisition of alternate identity. And who knows when the next immoral war will be foisted on us? It can't hurt to be prepared.

By obtaining the right documents individuals can rather easily take on foreign citizenships, too. Most countries have much more lax “safeguards” against the paper penetration of their document systems than the U.S. Although superficially the more centralized countries appear to have better control of their subjects, it is precisely this bureaucratic patina of confidence and superiority that makes their record systems more vulnerable to subversion. If bribes and theft don't work (they usually do), then the documents themselves are very susceptible to forgery and counterfeiting. By approaching the right “trade ministers,” many international businessmen have obtained numerous “legitimate” foreign citizenships, passports included. IT CAN BE DONE, U.S. “law” notwithstanding.

Many people have made a regular practice of beating creditors and collection agencies through the adroit use of aliases and alternate identities. They are living proof that debts belong to yesterday. Financially they live quite free—today.

A quick way up the occupational ladder is to combine mail order school diplomas, certificates, and degrees with expert ID. Not only can a clean break with the past be achieved, but a sharp increase in income as well. The only limit here is your imagination and desire.

Some of the sharpest operators create ID as a physician or clergyman and rake in commercial discounts as well as hundreds of free offers and special deals once their names get on “preferred” mailing lists. Such ID can be of great benefit socially, too.

Alternate ID is the quickest way to starting all over in the credit world. The most atrocious credit record is gone forever when your old name disappears. This is an oversimplification, of course, but what else can be said when you aren't “you” anymore?

Once some form of commercial or consumer credit is established, it becomes very easy to obtain all the various forms of credit cards, from bankcards to the Travel and Entertainment cards. Complete plans for starting all over in the credit game are outlined and detailed in our publication *Credit!*.

Avoid attending church. If you must, however, use an alias when attending, and make contributions in cash, never by check. If you are asked by inquisitive neighbors what church you attend, either name one of a different faith than theirs, or deny interest completely. Give

the minister totally false information about yourself, as these good folks are great gossips when approached by snoops.

Never tell neighbors where or for whom you work. Give them false information on this subject. If you are paid by check, don't deposit the paycheck in any account with your name on it. The best idea is to go to the bank on which it is drawn and cash it there. If you make a regular practice of this, avoid becoming familiar with any tellers or other bank personnel. Vary the times and days for visiting the bank. Visit different branches of the bank, too.

Another check cashing tip: Avoid getting it cashed at your favorite bar or tavern. FBI agents probably spend at least a third of their working hours hanging around such places, as they seem to attract the kinds of people they are looking for. Anytime there is a bank robbery, the first places the FBI checks out are all the bars within the immediate vicinity of the robbery. Don't laugh. It's true because it works.

Be wary of answering "personal" ads in newspapers, as well as job offers too neatly tailored to the type of work you did before disappearing. If the ad calls for replying to a box number at the newspaper, disregard totally: It's very likely a trap. Reply only to ads that can guarantee not having to give yourself away, such as offers for appointments at known companies. If phone numbers are provided in the ad, call only from a pay phone. There's always the possibility you might be calling directly to a bill collector or private investigator who will give you enough patter to smoke you out.

For some really unique ways to find employment, Eden Press distributes *How to Steal a Job*, in which you will discover literally every dishonest way there is to gain honest employment. With the techniques in this book, you can call all the shots. Well worth reading even for those who already have a job, too. Someone could be gunning for you. This book will open your eyes.

On the job, avoid giving background information to fellow workers. If you're planning to stay on the job only a short while, however, make an effort to plant false and misleading information in the minds of the other workers, such as your favorite pastimes, places you'd like to travel to or live someday, and your plans for the future. Insulate your private self by keeping your personal interests and ideas to yourself alone. Share the spurious with the curious.

Don't subscribe to any local newspapers delivered by carriers. Buy what you need at a news rack. These cute kids have sometimes been "helpful" sources of information about people's habits at home.

Don't be obvious in your living habits. Turn lights off at a decent hour, keep stereo music from annoying neighbors, don't place empty pony kegs on the front porch, and don't have pets that stray or annoy. Don't do major engine overhauls in the driveway, either.

Be very careful about who comes to see you at your residence. Avoid anything unusual which might spark the interest of neighbors. If what you do or the people with whom you must

deal are “interesting,” it might be best to arrange get-togethers elsewhere. Keep your nest clean—good “criminal” advice.

Avoid using banks except for actually cashing checks given you by other people. Try to conduct your affairs with cash and money orders. When using the latter, never write your name on the face or the line marked “Payer.” Use fake names, account numbers, or business names.

For most purposes money orders can be considered “untraceable,” since the issuing institutions (American Express, banks, US Post Office) file the paid orders by number only, not by other criteria which might tend to give you away. People and businesses to whom you might remit money orders virtually never record this number, either. They are usually happy to be paid by money order and will consider it the same as cash. Individuals wanting to hide income and/or otherwise disguise their financial dealings find money orders most useful in shortchanging the bandits at IRS, too.

Undertakers are another source like ministers, in that they are good talkers. If you have to deal with one, be on your guard with what you tell him. If you are called on to provide information for a death certificate, give him only the data he actually needs. It should be easy to appear too grief-stricken to want to chat.

Whenever you need the services of a physician, dentist, hospital, etc., make it standard practice to use an alias and an address other than where you live. Pay in cash. Recite—don’t display—your “driver’s license” number and Social Security Number, making sure they are totally fake. Other data requested, such as employer, date of birth, etc., should be misleading. Ignore the “warning” at the top of some hospital forms that federal law requires honest information. We’ve never heard of anyone’s getting busted for such a “crime” who also paid his bill. Fraud is fraud, but identity is your business. Medical records are very definitely NOT confidential. How else would life and health insurance companies be able to decide so imperiously who “deserves” their coverage, and at what rates? For most people, medical insurance itself is a fraud.

Don’t have milk or other items delivered to you on a regular schedule. The fewer people seen calling at your residence, the safer. Neighbors will often notice home deliveries, which can prove to be fertile leads for future snoops.

Avoid membership in political groups or other civic organizations. As a rule these groups are filled with super sneaky, nosey individuals more willing than not to stab someone in the back if it suits their selfish purposes. Total snakes.

Arrange to have your mail sent to a 24-hour Post Office box, or to a mail drop or mail forwarding service. This way the only mail to be left at your residence will be the “Occupant” variety. Make it a rule NEVER to sign for certified or registered mail. Tell the carrier that you are not the person named on the receipt, or that so-and-so moved months ago. Where? Austria...or was it Australia?

Avoid having arguments or run-ins with neighbors. An old, unresolved grudge might be just the spark that sends an investigator to your new location. "Getting even" is a passion few people can resist.

If a snoop is trying to trace you by telephone he may invite you to call him person-to-person collect. DON'T DO IT. Ignore the request, no matter what the excuse is. You might be tempted with some pie-in-the-sky lie, but what he's really after is your location. If you don't give yourself away in the conversation, he will simply call the operator back for time and charges, and while she's at it, the location of the telephone originating the call. She will be only too happy to help.

If you have to live in a motel, hotel or nosy apartment complex, always make it a point to be ordinary and outwardly polite to any employees on the premises. Give them no reason to remember you other than as a normal person. Freaky behavior is easily noticed and remembered by telephone operators, janitors, maids, superintendents, house detectives, and bellboys. Tips make them talk, too.

It's safest not to take in roomers or boarders, even though they can help with expenses and provide companionship. The fact is, they can get "too close" to you by picking up all kinds of information tidbits which could come back to haunt you should certain kinds of third parties start pumping them. Even though you might feel you could trust them, it's very easy for a friend to give you away... innocently.

In changing to a new identity within the same general area, make it your policy to patronize none of the commercial establishments you did before the name change. This would include service-oriented businesses, too, such as shoe repairs, TV repairs, photographers, cleaners, poodle parlors and massage parlors. If you or a member of your family had been assisted by such charity organizations as the March of Dimes or Community Chest, make sure that future aid is obtained from some other organization.

If you need to have prescriptions filled often, do two things: (1) Have them filled by different pharmacies; don't patronize the same one repeatedly, and (2) Never give the pharmacist your correct address and/or telephone number. If you are in need of continuing prescription, such as for certain heart conditions or diabetes, consider having it filled by mail from one of the large interstate mail-order pharmacies. These outfits usually offer greatly reduced prices as well, as they are willing to deal in generics, as opposed to strictly name-brand drugs. Check 'em out.

Try to avoid all contact with law enforcement people. They are like sponges whenever they deal with the public. They take in endless quantities of information whether you are the victim or the perpetrator. Avoid trouble and avoid cops.

Credit bureaus and department stores will have credit files on you if you've used them in the past. It would be safest to avoid using credit in the future, but if you need to get plugged back into the credit scene, it would be advisable first to read our own book, *Credit!*, to see how

credit can be set up from scratch under a new identity. This useful book has the kind of inside information one needs to make the credit-granting system perform to his special situation.

If you follow our suggestions regarding delivery of your mail, you will naturally never accept any Registered or Certified mail at your address. Since the carrier will never know your identity by leaving only mail addressed "Occupant," you can safely tell him that you are not whoever is named on the piece of mail he is trying to deliver. Don't be rude or arouse suspicion; simply help him do his job by telling him there is no such person at your address. If he asks who you are, he's out of line. He will return the letter marked "Unable to Deliver at this Address," or "Unknown at this Address," or something else to the same effect.

Sometimes snoops will address mail to a fictitious person "care of" your last known name and address in the hopes it will be forwarded (somehow), and that you will have the stupidity to return it to them with your new address (provided by you). Any suspicious or unfamiliar mail with your new address should simply be marked "Unknown," "Return to Sender," etc., and deposited in a public mailbox for return.

If the letter doesn't come back to the sender because you kept it or chucked it, he may well try again with something more enticing, or even pay a personal visit. Tracing by mail is the cheapest route for snoopers, so be on the lookout for any mail you're not expecting or seems the slightest bit suspicious. This will be the opening salvo in any investigation to determine your whereabouts. Watch your mail!

Providing any information other than return instructions per above can invite disaster, too. Putting on a fake forwarding address, or even a "General Delivery" notice, will tell the sender, when the letter is returned, that someone at the address on the letter knows more than he does. The "Registered Letter," physical surveillance, or a personal visit will be his next move. You can count on it.

Be especially watchful for any letters with an "Attorney's" return address. They deserve no more respect than any other letter. If you're not expecting correspondence from your own attorney, it's very likely a fake name used by an investigator. This gambit is many times used on third parties (close relatives of yours) in the hopes they know where you really are and that they have the "courtesy" to forward the letter to you. This is a good reason for you NOT to tell relatives where you can be reached. If they don't know, they can't tell.

If you can trust a particular person to forward items to your P.O. box or mail forwarding service, at least instruct them to place the letter in another (cover) envelope so that no forwarding instructions are on the face of the original envelope. You can decide what to do with the mail when you get it. If you want it returned, do NOT drop it in a box in your area—the stamp of the main post office near you will likely be on the envelope, much to the glee of the sender. Either send it back to your friend in still another envelope for him to remail locally, or use a mail forwarding service in a distant city to remail per your instructions. Again, BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR MAIL. Knowing how to deal with your mail is vital in disappearing. Think first before acting!!

Avoid drawing attention to yourself. Don't exhibit "socially unacceptable" behavior publicly. Cops are programmed to bust anyone who appears "suspicious" (different from them). Jails, psycho wards, and prisons aren't exactly "free."

Your appearance, possessions and actions should always justify your presence on a legitimate (conventional) basis. This is the best way to avoid suspicion.

If you are stopped and questioned, always be able to give a reasonable explanation of why you are there, where you are from, and where you are going. Smile and be "helpful."

A sullen or hostile attitude triggers the cops for a bust—your bust. So go ahead and "Kill 'em with kindness." You'll win by keeping your freedom.

Even perfectly legal behavior can arouse suspicion. Avoid such things as solitary walks late at night, or wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather. Store detectives love to follow shoppers wearing over-sized clothing, too. The police find it easy, even entertaining, to pin stray raps on such "suspicious" characters. Days and weeks can go by before they decide they've made a "mistake." Really!

Examine your daily habits and eliminate any that might possibly be regarded as "peculiar," especially if performed publicly.

Live in a large city where you can have the protection of anonymity. Avoid small towns where the only sport is gossip—about you. Your business should be no one else's.

Appear to be lower-middle class in your standard of living. Don't attract the attention given the very poor or the obviously well off.

Rent a house or apartment that appears "respectable," but no more plush than the average cop can afford.

If you like to live it up, do it somewhere other than around where you live and work. Try Las Vegas, New York, New Orleans, Jamaica, Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, etc.

Dress conventionally. Adopt what you perceive as the broad community standard. Don't be black or white as long as gray has so many shades. Blend in. Be clean and neat, never showy or gaudy.

Conformity for guys means neat beard (if any), no long hair or freaky clothes. Absolutely no "gang" styles or "colors."

For the ladies, no sexy, convention-flaunting attire such as mini-skirts and see-thru blouses without underwear. The man loves to drool over "liberated" lassies, and often does more.

Have conventional answers to common questions such as where you are from, where you work, where your family lives, etc. Be vague, however. Change the focus of the questioning to facts about the questioner. Let him do the talking!

There's less heat in telling plausible lies than in countering with self-righteous silence. The object is to avoid suspicion, so be a "reasonable" person. Lying is not illegal unless you are under oath or perpetrating a fraud.

When confronted by federal agents or other law enforcement officers, you have no obligation to talk to them. If you do, however, make sure you don't lie. Making false statements to federal officers is a bust. A good way to turn the "meeting" in your favor, is to inform the officer that he should take up the matter with your attorney, whose name and address you are willing to provide. If you don't have an attorney at present, tell him you are in the process of obtaining one, and that you will so notify him when you do. This will tell the agent-snoop that (1) you are a cool customer who knows how to take care of himself by knowing his rights, and (2) that for him to deal with your attorney will be tantamount to having to take you to court—something he's obviously not (yet) ready to do. Your talking to the officer could very likely insure you an earlier court date, if that's what you want.

It's perfectly moral to lie to someone who asks about things that are none of his business. HE is the one acting immorally. Don't forget!

Don't throw wild parties. Far too many busts come courtesy of tender-eared, blue-nosed, fink-ass neighbors.

Don't make speed, DMT, THC, acid, or nitro in your kitchen. Window sills aren't the safest places to cultivate, either.

Hold your stereo down to "mood level" late at night. Not everyone mellows out with Led Zepplin or the Stones.

Your neighbors are the most dangerous people you know. You can include relatives here, too. They will ALL snitch without compunction. "Calling the cops" is fair sport in towns of all sizes, so don't antagonize. Be friendly; stay friendly—but on your terms.

Be superficially "nice" to your neighbors, but have as little as possible to do with them. Ideally, you don't want them to know anything about you.

Even if you observe all these precautions you might still be harassed by criminals, both private and public. Whatever you do, don't blow your cover and thus lead them to suspect you. Keep your temper, be humble and polite, and refrain from shouting matches and/or slugfests. Remember you are a minority of one. "They" still have the guns and bars.

If you're not content, however, to let vengeance be the Lord's, at least abide by this cardinal rule of guerrilla warfare: Don't let the enemy determine your tactics. Retaliate at a time and place with weapons of your choosing.

Any artistic activity that might attract unfavorable attention, such as writing, nude photography, erotic sculpture, etc., should be done under a "nom de plume." Provide a separate address for any such names. P.O. boxes are fine.

Never express controversial opinions around home or at work. If you preach, do it in another town or state.

Avoid being fingerprinted. Don't apply for civil service jobs. The FBI would like to have everyone fingerprinted so they could control individual lives, but so far they've been stopped.

Stay out of the armed forces. Here again fingerprinting labels you forever with the only method of positive identification.

Don't apply for security clearances or seek employment in firms that routinely fingerprint.

Don't take part in mass demonstrations or dissident activities that might lead to mass arrests. Fingerprinting would surely follow.

The thumbprint required on applications for driver's licenses in many states (like California) does not go to the FBI. It is kept with the applications "on file," and its main purpose seems to be that of psychological deterrence. The states make no efforts to classify these thumbprints, and the FBI is not interested in helping. Applicants who want to make sure their thumbprints are absolutely worthless will press extra hard and make a slight twisting movement with their thumb as it is being printed. The result is a perfect smudge—worthless.

NEVER order utility services in your real name. Utility companies are the first watering hole for skip tracers.

Keep your name out of public records, such as business licenses, permits, and tax accounts. Operate under another name or use another person as a front. It's very easy to file "fictitious firm name statements" using minimal ID.

Always subscribe to magazines and newspapers under alternate names. Pay by mail using money orders. Don't have your name on the money order. Simply keep the receipts.

Likewise, always order merchandise by mail under an alias. Again, pay with money orders without your name on them.

Own real estate under either a cooperative relative's name, or a fictitious one created especially for the purpose. Names of phony businesses work well here, as it is perfectly understandable and justified for a business to own real property. Since real estate transactions are almost always at "arms length," it is quite simple to hide behind your agent or broker. In this area money talks more loudly than you do, so it's not too difficult to arrange things to suit yourself.

If you have to vote use your "legal" address. Just make sure you don't live there. So-called "voter ID cards" are a snap to obtain, as no proof of identity is required. The only "security" for the registration process is your sworn statement.

Protect the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your friends. Use a code of your own making to disguise the actual names and numbers, or try to memorize what you need to know. You'd be amazed at how much you can remember in this area if you make the effort.

Try to avoid carrying this coded address book with you. Cops always flash on such items, and so-called "rings" are usually busted this way. A smart thing to do would be to carry a dummy book of names and numbers selected at random from the phone book. Keep your working book stashed in a safe place.

This practice protects you, too, inasmuch as suspicion is cast on you should some of your friends be busted and their names appear in your book.

Don't engage in illegal activity on other people's property without their express consent. Save the dope and skin scenes for places where no one else can get roused besides the actual participants.

Don't ask questions which intrude on the privacy of others. Ask general questions, not specific. One might not want you to know where he works, but wouldn't mind telling you his occupation.

Adopt the attitude that personal information such as your school background, national origin, interests, politics, family income, etc., is NO ONE'S business but your own. And stick to it!! Snooping will thereby become so difficult that suspicion will be cast on the snooper rather than on you.

When faced with such an inquisitive person, have prepared a set of standard answers that you can deliver without discomfort or concern. But if the person is really obnoxious, give him some out-and-out lies, which, when "reported" in the right places, will make him look more like the ass he is.

Don't request receipts unless the amount is large. Make them intelligible only to the parties involved. Remember that cash still has no names on it, which is why Big Brother can hardly wait for the day of the "cashless" society.

One caution, however: Most banks have well established policies for recording serial numbers of large denomination bills whenever they are deposited or withdrawn in large amounts. ALL transactions of \$10,000 or more are reported to the IRS. So play small and remain inconspicuous.

Payment of taxes of all kinds should be largely a matter of personal convictions. The public debate on "tax protest" is endless, so only a few generally observed practices will be mentioned here.

The basic rule, in which even the IRS concurs, is pay only what you are liable for. This means taking advantage of any and all loopholes to the fullest with the ultimate aim of paying no tax whatever. Don't forget, however, that most federal prisons have rather distinguished populations of tax-evading accountants, attorneys, businessmen and politicians. If avoiding personal income tax, both state and federal, is your goal, by all means study well or seek competent advice. Texas and Nevada still have no state income taxes, in case you're thinking of relocating to beat some taxes.

Sales and use taxes can often be avoided by buying consumer items through personal channels such as friends, bazaars, swap meets (some), classified want ads, bartering, and business exchanges. Out-of-state mail order purchases are exempt from local taxes, too.

Sharp practices, such as claiming 10 or 12 exemptions to reduce the weekly bite of withholding, or making a deal with your employer to be paid in cash (which a great many do willingly) are ways of lessening, even eliminating your tax, but can't be recommended if you plan on remaining in the same job for over a year or so, or if you don't wish to live with a solid alternate identity.

A "compromise" in the above dilemma is to maintain a minimal tax profile, but plan on earning the bulk of your income through non-recorded means, say, odd jobs for cash. Lead a "straight" life for the tax vultures, but live "underground" with another trade and/or name.

In seeking employment you are usually asked for former job references. If you know that some of them will be negative DON'T LIST THEM! For the resulting "gaps" in your employment history, have already prepared the names and addresses of your former "employers." They could be local or out-of-state, in which case they probably won't be verified except by mail. Of course you will be prepared for this by listing a mail forwarding service's address as that of your former "employer." Merely pay the first month's fee and notify the service of your code name—a company ("employer"). You will then be able to rewrite your own employment history. Oh Happy Day! Gaps can also be covered by using attendance at school or travel abroad as alternatives to negative job references.

For local job references, a good trick is to ask, or pay, a businessman's secretary to give all the goody information right over the telephone. Provide the phone number on the application, naturally, but remember that the number may very well be verified first by a call to Information. When it checks out, your application will appear quite honest, won't it?

Personal references on either employment or credit applications are a laugh. They are virtually never verified. Provide them, of course but feel no compunction whatever in lifting random names and assumed relationships right from the phone book. A locally known doctor or minister is a safe bet, too.

For credit references bear in mind that outfits like big department stores and most credit unions will not give out information to anyone on their customer's or member's accounts. This means you can use any number of these references with impunity when applying for credit as the lender will not be able to verify one way or the other if your application is true—a fact he will definitely NOT tell you, however. A complete guide to establishing credit and obtaining credit cards is our own book, *Credit!* Very useful, indeed.

Consider using a typewriter for all your correspondence, as it is not only more impersonal, but also impossible to be “traced” to you. Whereas handwriting can give you away, typewriting cannot. Only the machine itself can be shown to be the one used for a particular piece of correspondence. Electric machines are even more impersonal than manual in that the striking pressure is uniform for all letters. Manual typewriting can show that you have a weak “a” or a strong “k” or “c”, for example. Be careful, too, of allowing the keys to clog to the point that the enclosed portions of letters begin to fill in. When the “e” and the “o” look alike, it's time to get out the gum cleaner. Typewriters using carbon ribbons do not have this problem.

As an added layer of protection for your correspondence, consider mailing a Xerox copy of the letter. There will be enough distortion in the copy to make tracing you mighty difficult. Should you begin using a typewriter regularly, you might plan to trade it in every six months or so for another model, different typeface, etc. They are rather cheap to rent, so this is a good possibility, too. Keep ‘em guessing....

When going from the “old you” to the “new you,” it is usually a good idea to drop any old hobbies that could provide the basis for an informal “stakeout” of your possible activities. If it is known that you can never pass a museum or fishing pier without indulging yourself, you have an automatic lead to those who might want to go looking for you. Changing activities can be an excellent way of building your new identity. Not only will the old ways fade faster, but also your new acquaintances will provide the support and interest in creating the new identity more rapidly and completely.

Whenever you rent a new place to live, insist on the right to change the locks. Refuse to give the landlord the new key, too. Many times people have arrived home to find a snoopy landlord (lady, too) going through personal belongings, papers, etc. Items and possessions which might tend to give someone the wrong ideas about your identity, activities, interests, etc., should be stored in locked boxes of sturdy construction. Misleading items can be placed innocently in the open. Be observant of items being rearranged or moved, too. Until you're secure in your new location, you might take the precaution of placing hairs on doorjambs,

threads across the threshold, matches on the tops of doors. When choosing locks and keys, select those not readily available in the area.

FINAL NOTE: Let us know of other low profile technique you have heard of or used yourself. We want this book to be a growing collection of the best information on disappearing and living free of past problems and dangers. Much of what you have read in this book has come from readers who chose to share their ideas and experiences with us. We will be looking forward to hearing from you. Happy trails!

## Chapter 10

### Sources & Resources

We want to acquaint you with some other helpful publications on the subjects you have encountered in this book. You can usually tell from the titles what their topics are, but we have also made explanatory remarks where appropriate. All these books and reports are available in our Privacy Catalog, which you can obtain free by contacting us at the numbers below.

- The Paper Trip I**, 88 pages, Item #483, \$17.95 (*New identity from government sources*)
- The Paper Trip II**, 88 pages, Item #484, \$19.95 (*New identity from government sources*)
- The Paper Trip III**, 154 pages, Item #901, \$29.95 (*New identity from government sources*)
- I. D. By Mail**, 64 pages, Item #678, \$24.95 (*Privately-issued ID cards and documents*)
- Degrees By Mail**, 88 pages, Item #971, \$19.95 (*Blank or customized, transcripts too*)
- Where to Write for Birth & Death Records**, 24 pages, #631, \$7.95
- How to Create a New Birth Certificate** (video), #819, \$19.95
- Collection & Use of Social Security Numbers**, 24 pages, #600, \$15.00
- Social Security Number Fraud**, 68 pages, #641, \$14.95 (*Investigative guide*)
- Handbook of Vital Records Information**, 82 pages, #480, \$14.95
- Passports to Privacy**, 87 pages, #45, \$25.00 (*Getting foreign passports*)
- The Passport Report**, 300 pages, #915, \$50.00 (*Master guide to foreign passports*)
- The Consular Anti-Fraud Handbook**, 128 pages, #601, \$14.95
- How to Legally Obtain a Second Passport**, 164 pages, #902, \$19.95
- Mother's Maiden Name**, 67 pages, #930, \$14.95
- Privacy, How to Get It, How to Enjoy It**, 88 pages, #400, \$18.95
- Personal and Business Privacy**, 154 pages, #405, \$24.95
- Asset Protection Secrets**, 203 pages, #922, \$24.95 (*Written by master attorney*)
- Bulletproof Privacy**, 160 pages, #520, \$18.95 (*Street-smart techniques*)
- The Worldwide Mail Drop Guide**, 100 pages, #990, \$19.95
- The Postal Mail Cover**, 36 pages, #402, \$12.95
- The Eden Directory of Private Mail Drops**, 90 pages, #681, \$19.95 (*Over 5000 listings*)
- Wealth & Asset Protection Strategies**, 102 pages, #987, \$10.00 (*Another master attorney*)
- This subject also available on **90 minute VHS**, #959, \$19.95
- Privacy Strategies for Investors**, 16 pages, #841, \$10.00

**The Eden Guide to Complete Financial Privacy**, 200 pages, #675, \$24.95  
**Nevada As Your Corporate Home**, 19 pages, #932, \$10.00  
**Clarkson's No Checks**, 38 pages, #700, \$12.00 (*How to avoid banks*)  
**The Invisible Investor**, 380 pages, #900, \$19.95  
**Banking in Silence**, 329 pages, #917, \$50.00 (*Banking secretly offshore—safely*)  
**Portable Trades and Opportunities**, 300 pages, #553, \$19.95 (*How to survive anywhere.*)  
**You & The Police**, 128 pages, #710, \$19.95 (*How to deal with police safely and correctly.*)  
**Divorce Dirty Tricks**, 252 pages, #423, \$18.95 (*Divorce to your advantage.*)  
**How to Beat the Bill Collector**, 48 pages, #478, \$14.95  
**How Not to Pay Your Bill Collector**, 104 pages, #669, \$15.95  
**Degrees By Mail**, 88 page, #971, \$19.95 (Custom degrees, diplomas, transcripts, by mail)  
**The GED Tests**, 16 pages, #884, \$4.00 (Full details about “equivalency” tests.)  
**Bear's Guide to Earning College Degrees Non-Traditionally**, 336 pages, #463, \$29.95  
**How to Steal a Job**, 126 pages, #465, \$16.95, (“Insider” tricks to get an honest job.)  
**How to Be an Expert in Six Months or Less**, 18 pages, #25, \$10.00  
**How to Be Working in 48 Hours Anywhere in America**, 15 pages, #879, \$7.00  
**High Earnings Workers Who Don't Have a Bachelor's Degree**, 8 pages, #885, \$4.00  
**How to Get a Job Fast**, 25 pages, #861, \$10.00  
**Insider's Guide to Bankcards With No Credit Check**, 80 pages, #766, \$19.95  
**Credit**, 48 pages, #476, \$14.95 (*Improving and starting over with credit.*)  
**Fast Money Plans of the Insiders**, 56 pages, #934, \$19.95  
**The Lazy Person's Secrets to Overnight Wealth**, #143, \$3.00  
**How to Get \$1,000 to \$5,000 Free and Clear Within 30 Days**, #233, \$10.00  
**Last Chance Guide to Financial Success**, 50 pages, #622, \$17.95  
**Make \$300 a Day Detailing Cars, Trucks and Vans**, 112 pages, #529, \$19.95  
**How to Earn \$15 to \$50 an Hour with a Pick-Up Truck or Van**, 53 pages, #451, \$19.95  
**Making Money at Garage Sales, Swap Meets & Flea Markets**, 19 pages, #860, \$9.00  
**1101 Businesses You Can Start From Home**, 315 pages, #964, \$19.95  
**Start & Operate Your Own Import Export Business at Home**, 20 pages, #161, \$10.00  
**Make a Fortune with Classified Ads**, 20 pages, #168, \$10.00  
**Million Dollar Hobby**, 20 pages, #108, \$10.00  
**Take Over Going Businesses**, 20 pages, #114, \$10.00  
**98 Underground Businesses**, 65 pages, #440, \$19.95  
**How to Sell Information by Mail**, 20 pages, #164, \$9.00  
**National Home Employment Directory**, 32 pages, #771, \$12.00

**NOTE:** Eden Press offers *HUNDREDS* of other books and ideas for self-employment, home businesses, and financial success in *The Privacy Catalog*, *FREE* upon request.

#### **THE PRIVACY CATALOG—FREE!**

Lists all publications available from Eden Press.

For a free copy, **call:** 1-800-338-8484.

Or **write:** Eden Press, P.O. Box 8410, Fountain Valley, CA 92728.

Visit our **website** at: [www.EdenPress.com](http://www.EdenPress.com) for complete listings, too.

# **Domestic Violence Hotlines and Resources**

The **National Domestic Violence Hotline** is staffed 24 hours a day by trained counselors who can provide crisis assistance and information about shelters, legal advocacy, health care centers, and counseling.

## **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

## **State Coalitions on Domestic Violence**

### **Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 4762

Montgomery, AL 36101

1-800-650-6522

### **Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

130 Seward Street, Room 209

Juneau, AK 99801

Phone: 907-586-3650

FAX: 907-463-4493

### **Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

100 West Camelback Road, Suite 109

Phoenix, AZ 85013

Phone: 602-279-2900

FAX: 602-279-2980

E-mail: [acadv@azcadv.org](mailto:acadv@azcadv.org)

### **Arkansas Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

#1 Sheriff Lane, Suite C

North Little Rock, AR 72114

Phone: 501-812-0571

FAX: 501-812-0578

E-mail: [ssigmon@arkansas.net](mailto:ssigmon@arkansas.net)

### **Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence**

2064 Eastman Ave., Suite 104

Ventura, CA 93003

Phone: 805-654-8141

FAX: 805-654-1264

24-Hour Hotline: 805-656-1111

Spanish Hotline: 800-300-2181

TDD: 805-656-4439

**Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women**

3711 Long Beach Blvd. Suite 718

Long Beach CA 90807

Toll-Free: 888-SCCBW-52

Phone: 562-981-1202

Fax: 562-981-3202

E-mail: [sccbw@sccbw.org](mailto:sccbw@sccbw.org)

**Colorado Domestic Violence Coalition**

P.O. Box 18902

Denver, CO 80218

TOLL-FREE: 888-778-7091

Phone: 303-831-9632

FAX: 303-832-7067

E-mail: [ccadv@ix.netcom.com](mailto:ccadv@ix.netcom.com)

**D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

513 U Street NW

Washington, DC 20001

Phone: 202-783-5332

FAX: 202-387-5684

**My Sister's Place**

P.O. Box 29596

Washington, DC 20017

24-hour hotline: 202-529-5991

Administrative Office: 202-529-5261

**Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 847

Wilmington, DE 19899

Phone: 302-658-2958

FAX: 302-658-5049

Hotlines by Counties:

24-hour bilingual line: 888-LAC-C571 (888-522-2571)

New Castle: 302-762-6110

Kent & Sussex: 302-422-8058

**Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

308 East Park Avenue

Tallahassee, FL 32301

TOLL-FREE: 800-500-1119

Phone: 850-425-2749

FAX: 850-425-3091

**Georgia Advocates for Battered Women and Children**

250 Georgia Avenue, S.E., Suite 308

Atlanta, GA 30312

TOLL-FREE: 800-334-2836

Phone: 404-524-3847

FAX: 404-524-5959

**Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

716 Umi St., Unit 210

Honolulu, HI 96819

Phone: 808-832-9316

Fax: 808-841-6028

Email: [hscadv@pixi.com](mailto:hscadv@pixi.com)

**Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

2603 Bell Avenue, Suite 100

Des Moines, IA 50321

TOLL-FREE: 800-942-0333

Phone: 515-244-8028

FAX: 515-244-7417

**Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence**

815 Park Blvd, Suite 140

Boise, ID 83712

TOLL-FREE: 888-293-6118

Phone: 208-384-0419

FAX: 208-331-0687

E-mail: [domvio@micron.net](mailto:domvio@micron.net)

**Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

801 South 11th Street

Springfield, Illinois 62703

Phone: 217-789-2830

FAX: 217-789-1939

E-mail: [ilcadv@springnet1.com](mailto:ilcadv@springnet1.com)

**Friends of Battered Women and Their Children**

P. O. Box 5185

Evanston, IL 60204

Phone: 773-274-5232

FAX: 773-274-2214

HOTLINE: 1-800-603-HELP

E-mail: [info@afriendsplace.org](mailto:info@afriendsplace.org)

**Life Span**

P.O. Box 445  
Des Plaines IL 60016  
24-Hour Crisis Line: 847-824-4454  
Phone: 847-824-0382  
Fax: 847-824-5311  
E-mail: [life-span@life-span.org](mailto:life-span@life-span.org)  
Special site on Police Domestic Violence

**Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

2511 E. 46th Street, Suite N-3  
Indianapolis, IN 46205  
TOLL-FREE: 800-332-7385  
Phone: 317-543-3908  
FAX: 317-377-7050

**Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence**

820 S.E. Quincy, Suite 600  
Topeka, KS 66612  
TOLL-FREE: 888-END-ABUSE (Kansas state-wide hotline)  
Phone: 785-232-9784  
FAX: 785-232-9937

**Kentucky Domestic Violence Association**

P.O. Box 356  
Frankfort, KY 40602  
Phone: 502-875-4132  
FAX: 502-875-4268

**Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 77308  
Baton Rouge, LA 70879-7308  
Phone: 225-752-1296  
FAX: 225-751-8927

**Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence**

128 Main Street  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Phone: 207-941-1194  
FAX: 207-941-2327

**Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence**

6911 Laurel Bowie Road, Suite 309  
Bowie, MD 20715  
TOLL-FREE: 800-MD-HELPS  
Phone: 301-352-4574  
FAX: 301-809-0422

**Jane Doe Inc./Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence**

14 Beacon Street, Suite 507  
Boston, MA 02108  
Phone: 617-248-0922  
FAX: 617-248-0902

**Bay County Women's Center**

P.O. Box 1458  
Bay City, MI 48706  
TOLL-FREE: 800-834-2098  
Phone: 517-686-4551  
FAX: 517-686-0906

**Michigan 24-Hour Crisis Line: 517-265-6776**

**Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women**

450 North Syndicate Street, Suite 122  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
Metro-Area Hotline: 651-646-0994  
Phone: 651-646-6177  
FAX: 651-646-1527  
E-mail: mcbw@pclink.com

**Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

415 E. McCarty Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65101  
Phone: 573-634-4161  
FAX: 573-636-3728

**Women's Support and Community Services**

2838 Olive St.  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
HOTLINE: 314-531-2003  
Office: 314-531-9100

**Mississippi State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 4703  
Jackson, MS 39296-4703  
TOLL-FREE: 800-898-3234  
Phone: 601-981-9196  
FAX: 601-981-2501  
E-mail: mcadv@misnet.com

**Crisis Line**

P.O. Box 6644  
Great Falls, MT 59406  
Phone: 406-453-HELP  
TOLL-FREE: 1-888-587-0199

**Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**

P.O. Box 633  
Helena, MT 59624  
Phone: 406-443-7794  
FAX: 406-443-7818

**Nebraska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition**

825 M Street, Suite 404  
Lincoln, NE 68508-2253  
TOLL-FREE: 800-876-6238  
Phone: 402-476-6256  
FAX: 402-476-6806

**Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence**

100 West Grove, Suite 315  
Reno, NV 89509  
TOLL-FREE: 800-500-1556  
Phone: 775-828-1115  
FAX: 775-828-9991

**SAFE House**

18 Sunrise Drive, Ste. G-70  
Henderson, NV 89014  
Phone: 702-451-4203  
FAX: 702-451-4302  
E-mail: [safe@intermind.net](mailto:safe@intermind.net)

**New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**

P.O. Box 353  
Concord, NH 03302-0353  
TOLL-FREE: 800-852-3388 (in New Hampshire)  
Helpline: 603-225-9000 (outside of New Hampshire)  
Phone: 603-224-8893  
Fax: 603-228-6096

**New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women**

2620 Whitehorse/Hamilton Square Road  
Trenton, NJ 08690  
TOLL-FREE: for Battered Lesbians: 800-224-0211 (in NJ only)  
Phone: 609-584-8107  
FAX: 609-584-9750  
TTY: 609-584-0027 (9am-5pm, then into message service)

**Strengthen Our Sisters**

P.O.Box U

Hewitt, N.J. 07421

E-mail: [ssisters@warwick.net](mailto:ssisters@warwick.net)

24-Hour Hotline: 973-728-0007

**New Mexico State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 25266

Albuquerque, NM 87125

TOLL-FREE: 800-773-3645 (in New Mexico Only)

Legal Helpline: 800-209-DVLH

Phone: 505-246-9240

FAX: 505-246-9434

E-mail: [nmcadv@nmcadv.org](mailto:nmcadv@nmcadv.org)

**New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

79 Central Avenue

Albany, NY 12206

TOLL-FREE: 800-942-6906

Phone: 518-432-4864

FAX: 518-463-3155

**North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

115 Market Street

Durham, NC 27701

Phone: 919-956-9124

FAX: 919-682-1449

**North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services**

State Networking Office

418 East Rosser Avenue, Suite 320

Bismarck, ND 58501

TOLL-FREE: 800-472-2911 (In ND Only)

Phone: 701-255-6240

FAX: 701-255-1904

**Ohio Domestic Violence Network**

4041 North High Street, Suite 400

Columbus, OH 43214

TOLL-FREE: 800-934-9840

Phone: 614-784-0023

FAX: 614-784-0033

**Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

2525 NW Expressway, Suite 208

Oklahoma City, OK 73116

TOLL-FREE: 800-522-9054

Phone: 405-848-1815

**Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**

520 N.W. Davis, Suite 310  
Portland, OR 97209  
TOLL-FREE: 800-622-3782  
Phone: 503-223-7411  
FAX: 503-223-7490

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence/National Resource  
Center on Domestic Violence**

6440 Flank Drive, Suite 1300  
Harrisburg, PA 17112-2778  
TOLL-FREE: 800-932-4632  
Phone: 717-545-6400  
FAX: 717-545-9456

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape**

125 N. Enola Drive  
Enola PA 17025  
HOTLINE: 800-692-7445  
Phone: 717-728-9740  
Fax: 717-728-9781  
TTY: 877-585-1091  
E-Mail: Stop@pcar.org

**Women's Center of Montgomery County**

***Main Administrative Office:***

101 Washington Lane, Ste. WC-1  
Jenkintown PA 19046  
Toll-free hotline: 800-773-2424

***Norristown Office:***

Women's Advocacy Project  
400 Courthouse Plaza, 18 W. Airy St.  
Norristown PA 19404  
610-279-1548

***Pottstown Office:***

Women's Advocacy Project  
555 High Street, 2nd Floor  
Pottstown PA 19464  
610-970-7363

**Laurel House**

P.O. Box 764  
Norristown, PA 19404  
Phone: 800-642-3150  
HOTLINE: 1-800-642-3150  
Fax: 610-275-4018  
E-Mail: LaurelHaus@aol.com

**Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

422 Post Road, Suite 202

Warwick, RI 02888

TOLL-FREE: 800-494-8100

Phone: 401-467-9940

FAX: 401-467-9943

**South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 7776

Columbia, SC 29202-7776

TOLL-FREE: 800-260-9293

Phone: 803-256-2900

FAX: 803-256-1030

**South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 141

Pierre, SD 57501

TOLL-FREE: 800-572-9196

Phone: 605-945-0869

FAX: 605-945-0870

**South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault**

1-800-430-SAFE

**Resource Center of Aberdeen, S.D.**

24-Hour Crisis Line: (605) 226-1212

Toll Free: (888) 290-2935

**Tennessee Task Force Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 120972

Nashville, TN 37212

TOLL-FREE: 800-356-6767

Phone: 615-386-9406

FAX: 615-383-2967

**Texas Council on Family Violence**

P.O. Box 161810

Austin, TX 78716

TOLL-FREE: 800-525-1978

Phone: 512-794-1133

FAX: 512-794-1199

**Families In Crisis, Inc.**

P.O. Box 25  
Killeen, Texas 76540  
(254) 634-1184 or (888) 799-SAFE

**Domestic Violence Advisory Council**

120 North 200 West  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
TOLL-FREE: 800-897-LINK  
Phone: 801-538-4100  
FAX: 801-538-3993

**Women Helping Battered Women**

Phone: 802-658-1996  
Toll-free: 1-800-228-7395

**Women's Rape Crisis Center**

1-800-489-7273

**Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 405  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
Phone: 802-223-1302  
FAX: 802-223-6943  
E-mail: vnadvsa@sover.net

**Virginians Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline**

2850 Sandy Bay Road, Suite 101  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
TOLL-FREE: 800-838-VADV  
Phone: 757-221-0990  
FAX: 757-229-1553

**Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

8645 Martin Way NE - Suite 103  
Lacey, WA 98516  
E-mail: wscadv@cco.net  
Phone: 360-407-0756  
FAX: 360-407-0761  
TTY: 360-407-0767

**Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline**

Tel: 800-562-6025  
E-mail: csn@willapabay.org

**West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Elk Office Center  
4710 Chimney Drive, Suite A  
Charleston, WV 25302  
Phone: 304-965-3552  
FAX: 304-965-3572

**Manitowoc Domestic Violence Center**

PO Box 1142  
Manitowoc, WI 54220  
Phone: 920-684-5770

**Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

1400 East Washington Avenue, Suite 232  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: 608-255-0539  
FAX: 608-255-3560

**Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

P.O. Box 236  
Laramie, WY 82073  
TOLL-FREE: 800-990-3877  
Phone: 307-755-5481  
FAX: 307-755-5482

**National Organizations**

**Family Violence Prevention Fund**

383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
Phone: 415-252-8900  
FAX: 415-252-8991

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Policy Office  
P.O. Box 34103  
Washington, DC 20043-4103  
Phone: 703-765-0339  
FAX: 202-628-4899

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

P.O. Box 18749  
Denver, CO 80218  
Phone: 303-839-1852  
FAX: 303-831-9251

**National Battered Women's Law Project**

275 7th Avenue, Suite 1206  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-741-9480  
FAX: 212-741-6438

**Victim Services**

**Domestic Violence Shelter Tour**

2 Lafayette Street  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-577-7700  
Fax: 212-385-0331  
24-hour hotline: 800-621-HOPE (4673)

**National Resource Center On DV**

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300  
Harrisburg, PA 17112  
Phone: 800-537-2238  
FAX: 717-545-9456

**Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence**

Family Violence Prevention Fund  
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
Phone: 800-313-1310  
FAX: 415-252-8991

**Battered Women's Justice Project**

Minnesota Program Development, Inc.  
4032 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
TOLL-FREE: 800-903-0111 Ext: 1  
Phone: 612-824-8768  
FAX: 612-824-8965

**Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Child Protection, and Custody**

NCJFCJ

P.O. Box 8970

Reno, NV 89507

Phone: 800-527-3223

FAX: 775-784-6160

*They are only a resource center for professionals and agencies.*

**Battered Women's Justice Project**

c/o National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women

125 South 9th Street, Suite 302

Philadelphia, PA 19107

TOLL-FREE: 800-903-0111 ext. 3

Phone: 215-351-0010

FAX: 215-351-0779

*National Clearinghouse is a national resource and advocacy center providing assistance to women defendants, their defense attorneys, and other members of their defense teams in an effort to insure justice for battered women charged with crimes.*

**National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape**

2325 Oak Street

Berkeley, CA 94708

Phone: 510-524-1582

**Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence**

936 North 34th Street, Suite 200

Seattle, WA 98103

Phone: 206-634-1903

FAX: 206-634-0115

**National Network to End Domestic Violence - Administrative Office**

c/o Texas Council on Family Violence

P.O. Box 161810

Austin, TX 78716

Phone: 512-794-1133

FAX: 512-794-1199

**National Network to End Domestic Violence**

666 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 303

Washington, DC 20003

Phone: 202-543-5566

FAX: 202-543-5626

